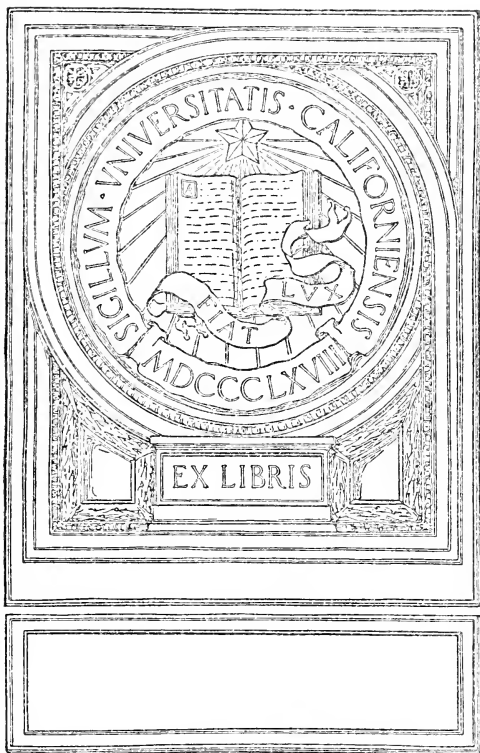


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Belle's Stratagem.

Doricourt. I'll breakfast, dine, and sup with you every day this week..

THE
BELLE'S STRATAGEM

A Comedy,
IN THREE ACTS.

BY
HANNAH COWLEY,

AUTHOR OF
THE RUNAWAY, WHO'S THE DUPE? ALBINA, THE SCHOOL FOR ELO-
QUENCE, THE WORLD AS IT GOES, (afterwards acted under the
new title of SECOND THOUGHTS ARE BEST), WHICH IS THE
MAN? ▲ BOLD STROKE FOR A HUSBAND, MORE WAYS
THAN ONE, SCHOOL FOR GREYBEARDS, FATE OF
SPARTA, A DAY IN TURKEY, THE TOWN
BEFORE YOU, ETC., ETC., ETC.,



THOMAS HAILES LACY,
89, STRAND, LONDON.

First Performed at the Theatre Royal Covent Garden, February 22, 1780.

MASQUEBADDERS, TRADESMEN, SERVANTS.

* Now omitted.

REMARKS

The Belle's Stratagem.

MRS. COWLEY is one of those writers in whom, if there be little to blame, there is nothing much to praise. Her characters are, for the most part, lively sketches, rather than finished portraits; her dialogue is easy, but without the brilliancy of wit, or the polish of elegance; and her plots are meagre in point of invention—they are a succession of incidents, not always connected by a regular story. Her farce of "*Who's the Dupe?*" displays a greater portion of comic talent than "*The Belle's Stratagem*;"—for *Gradus* is something like an original, and *Old Dorley* is drawn with considerable humour. But in this comedy we encounter little else than old friends with new faces. Sir George Touchwood, in many points, reminds us of Sir Peter Teazle; Mrs. Racket and Miss Ogle recall to our remembrance the good natured ladies of the scandalous college; while that impertinent trifler, Flutter, is a thing of shreds and patches, made up of *Tuttle* in *Love for Love*, *Faddle* in the *Foundling*, *Sir Benjamin Backbite*, and the whole host of ephemeral coxcombs, that have chattered from time immemorial in comedy and farce. The authoress has laid under contribution Goldsmith's comedy of *She Stoops to Conquer*, for the stratagems practised by Letitia Hardy; but more particularly Murphy's farce of *The Citizen*, where *Maria* plays off the very trick upon *Young Philpot*. In drawing the character of *Doricourt*, Mrs. Cowley has kept in mind *Valentine*, in "*Love for Love*;" his *mad scene* is but a weak imitation of the admirable original. As for Letitia Hardy—a man (as Falstaff says) knows not where to have her. She slips through your fingers like an eel. One moment she is love-stricken and sentimental—

"Then all for death, that opiate of the soul,
Lucretia's dagger, Rosamonda's bowl!"—

The next, she is a boisterous vulgar hoyden; and then, behold her metamorphosed into a romantic amazon, ready to change her sex and country, and to go down the middle and up again, in the victorious *war-dance* on the borders of the Lake Ontario! If she went to the *ball*, she could have no objection to stay to the *supper*. We are quite certain, that the method Letitia Hardy takes to *disgust* her lover must prove successful with any man of sense; but we are not equally so with regard to her stratagem to *win him*. A young lady *showing herself up* at a masquerade might be an amusing, but certainly not a very decent exhibition. Lady Touchwood is the most naturally drawn character in the piece. She exhibits a virtuous mind, struggling between duty and inclination—dazzled for a time with the false glare of gaiety and splendour, but reclaimed, and led back to happiness by the light of reason.

This comedy bids fair to continue popular on the stage: it *acts well*; and defects of dialogue and character are not always perceived by an audience, when a quick succession of images and incidents

rivets the eye, and fixes the attention. The *masquerade*, though somewhat too long, is sure to go off with *ecclat*; and Letitia Hardy, though a character extremely unnatural, will be seen and heard with effect, when played by a lively actress. The *denouement*, arising out of Hardy's pretended sickness, is extravagant and absurd. It is not often that a death-bed scene is rendered available to the purposes of mirth. There is much stuff about our national superiority—not only English *women*, but English *footmen*, are more virtuous and intelligent than those of France and Germany. The former are perfectly immaculate—

“ Our wives are pure—our daughters chaste,
Bear witness many a slender waist
From Charing Cross to ‘Change !”

And the latter take upon themselves to reason, form opinions, cogitate, and dispute with their masters; and, though they stand behind them in livery, are often before them in argument. It speaks little for the propriety and good taste of the public, that could applaud such flattery and falsehood.

Mr. Charles Kemble is seen to great advantage in Doricourt. The various allusions that are made to the agreeable person of this darling of the ladies, were sufficiently borne out by the appearance of the actor. Mr. Elliston was an admirable Doricourt, and, with Mrs. Davison for his Letitia Hardy, formed a very accomplished pair. Letitia Hardy is not calculated to display Miss Foote to particular advantage. She has some elegance, much simplicity, but little humour; and a large portion of the latter, and an unusual flow of animal spirit, are indispensable to the just performance of this character. Letitia fairly met with *her match* in the late Mrs. Jordan.

Few women have passed through life more beloved and respected, than the ingenious writer of this comedy. To a lively wit, she joined all those domestic virtues that render a woman the delight of society, and the charm of private life. Mrs. Cowley's poetical effusions are not particularly happy, being characterized by the affectation of the *Della-Cruscan* school, of which she was the well-known *Anna Matilda*. Among the principal, are “*The Maid of Arragon*,” “*The Siege of Acre*,” and “*The Scottish Village*.” She was born at Tiverton, Devonshire, about the year 1743, and died at the same place, March 11, 1809.

☞ D—G.

STAGE DIRECTIONS.

The Conductors of this work print no Plays but those which they have seen acted. The *Stage Directions* are given from their own personal observations, during the most recent performances.

EXITS and ENTRANCES.

R. means *Right*; L. *Left*; D. F. *Door in Flat*; R. D. *Right Door*; L. D. *Left Door*; S. E. *Second Entrance*; U. E. *Upper Entrance*; M. D. *Middle Door*.

RELATIVE POSITIONS.

R. means *Right*; L. *Left*; C. *Centre*; R. C. *Right of Centre*; L. C. *Left of Centre*.

R. R. C. C. L. C. L.

. *The Reader is supposed to be on the Stage, facing the Audience.*

BELLE'S STRATAGEM.

COSTUME—Period 1780

DORICOURT.—Sky-blue velvet cutaway coat and breeches, silver holes and buttons, flowered satin vest, silk stockings, pumps and latchets, black chapeau bras, white cravat, powdered bag wig. *2nd dress* : Damask morning gown. *3rd dress* : Handsome domino and mask.

HARDY.—Dark-red cloth square-cut coat, breeches and vest, small gold holes and buttons, ribbed silk stockings, black shoes and paste buckles, white cravat, full-curved white wig, three-cornered hat and gold loop. *2nd dress* : Silk morning gown. *3rd dress* : A gaudy Spanish suit, hat and feathers, mask. *4th dress* : Same as first. *5th dress* : White morning gown, white night-cap, and flour on face.

SIR GEORGE.—Buff cloth cutaway coat and breeches, silver holes and buttons, embroidered satin vest, white cravat, white silk stockings, pumps and latchets, chapeau bras.—*2nd dress* : Pink domino, trimmed with blue ribbon, hat and feathers the same colour.

FLUTTER.—Salmon-coloured cloth cutaway coat and breeches, gold holes and buttons, embroidered satin vest, properties in keeping, same as Doricourt. *2nd dress* : Handsome domino and mask.

SAVILLE.—Blue cloth cutaway coat and breeches, silver holes and buttons, embroidered satin vest, properties in keeping.

COURTALL.—Green cloth cutaway coat and breeches, gold holes and buttons, embroidered satin vest, properties in keeping. *2nd dress* : Domino, etc., same as Sir George.

VILLERS.—Black cloth cutaway coat and breeches, gold holes and buttons, embroidered vest, properties in keeping. *2nd dress* : Domino and mask. *Mask* : (Fourth Act.) Slate-coloured domino with scallop shells, drab hat and shell, staff with cross, and bottle, fleshings and sandals.

DICK.—Handsome livery, powdered wig.

GIBSON.—Handsome dark livery, powdered wig.

SIR GEORGE'S SERVANT.—Handsome livery, powdered wig.

SAVILLE'S SERVANT.—Handsome livery, top boots, three-cornered hat, powdered wig.

GENTLEMEN.—(Fourth Act.) Various coloured dresses, in same style as Villers, dominoes and masks.

LETITIA.—*1st dress* : Plain white muslin. *2nd dress* : White satin slip leno dress, trimmed with silver, white plume of feathers. *3rd dress* : A domino and mask.

LADY FRANCES.—Leno dress, trimmed with satin flowers. *2nd dress* : Domino and mask.

MRS. RACKETT.—Black leno dress, trimmed with silver, head-dress of white feathers. *2nd dress* : Domino and mask.

MISS OGLE.—Blue satin body, white petticoat trimmed with blue satin. *2nd dress* : Domino and mask.

KITTY WILLIS.—White dress, domino and mask like Lady Frances.

LADIES.—In various coloured dresses, some with dominoes, all with masks.

Time in performance, 2 hours 30 minutes.

[*Performance Free.*]

THE
BELLE'S STRATAGEM.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*Lincoln's Inn.* (1. G.)

Enter SAVILLE, L. 1. E. followed by SERVANT, looking round, as if at a loss.

SAVIL. Lincoln's Inn—well. But where to find him, now I am in Lincoln's Inn?—Where did he say his master was?

SERV. He only said in Lincoln's Inn, sir.

SAVIL. That's pretty! And your wisdom never inquired at whose chambers?

SERV. Sir, you spoke to the servant yourself.

SAVIL. If I was too impatient to ask questions, you ought to have taken directions, blockhead!

Enter COURTALL, singing, R.

Ha, Courtall!—Bid him keep the horses in motion, and then enquire at all the chambers round. (*Exit SERVANT, L.*)—What the devil brings you to this part of the town?—Have any of the Long Robes handsome wives, sisters, or chambermaids?

COURT. Perhaps they have;—but I came on a different errand; and had thy good fortune brought thee here half an hour sooner, I'd have given thee such a treat,—ha, ha, ha!

SAVIL. I'm sorry I missed it: what was it?

COURT. I was informed a few days since, that my cousins Fallow were come to town, and desired earnestly to see me at their lodgings in Warwick Court, Holborn.

Away drove I, painting them all the way as so many Hebes. They came from the farthest part of Northumberland, had never been in town, and in course were made up of rusticity, innocence, and beauty.

SAVIL. Well!

COURT. After waiting thirty minutes, during which there was a violent bustle above, in bounced five sallow damsels, four of them Maypoles;—the fifth, Nature, by way of variety, had bent in the *Æsop* style. But they all opened at once, like hounds on a fresh scent: "O, cousin Courtall!—How do you do, cousin Courtall?—Lord, Cousin, I am glad you are come! We want you to go with us to the Park, and the plays, and the opera, and all the fine places!"—The devil, thought I, my dears, may attend you, for I am sure I won't. However, I heroically staid an hour with them, and discovered the virgins were all come to town with the hopes of leaving it—wives: their heads full of knights, baronets, fops, and adventures.

SAVIL. Well, how did you get off?

COURT. O, pleaded a million engagements. However, conscience twitched me; so I breakfasted with them this morning, and afterwards 'squired them to the gardens here, as the most private place in town; and then took a sorrowful leave, complaining of my hard, hard fortune, that obliged me to set off immediately for Dorsetshire,—ha, ha, ha!

SAVIL. I congratulate your escape! Courtall at Almack's, with five awkward country cousins!—ha, ha, ha! Why, your existence, as a man of gallantry, could never have survived it.

COURT. Death and fire! had they come to town, like the rustics of the last age, to see St. Paul's, the lions, and the waxwork—at their service; but the cousins of our days come up ladies—and with the knowledge they glean from magazines and pocket books, fine ladies; laugh at the bashfulness of their grandmothers, and boldly demand their *entrees* in the first circles.

SAVIL. Come, give me some news. I have been at war with woodcocks and partridges these two months, and am a stranger to all that has passed out of their region.

COURT. O, enough for three gazettes. The ladies are going to petition for a bill, that during the war every man may be allowed two wives.

SAVIL. 'Tis impossible they should succeed, for the majority of both houses know what it is to have one!

COURT. But pr'ythee, Saville, how came you to town?

SAVIL. I came to meet my friend Doricourt, who, you know, is lately arrived from Rome.

COURT. Arrived! Yes, faith, and has cut us all out! His carriage, his liveries, himself, are the rage of the day! His first appearance set the whole ton in a ferment, and his valet is besieged by levees of tailors, habit makers, and other ministers of fashion, to gratify the impatience of their customers for becoming *à la mode de Doricourt*.

SAVIL. Indeed! Well, those little gallantries will soon be over; he's on the point of marriage.

COURT. Marriage! Doricourt on the point of marriage! 'tis the happiest tidings you could have given, next to his being hanged. Who is the bride elect?

SAVIL. I never saw her; but 'tis Miss Hardy, the rich heiress—the match was made by the parents, and the courtship began on their nurses' knees; master used to crow at miss, and miss used to chuckle at master.

COURT. O! then by this time they care no more for each other than I do for my country cousins.

SAVIL. I don't know that; they have never met since thus high, and so, probably, have some regard for each other.

COURT. Never met! Odd!

SAVIL. A whim of Mr. Hardy's; he thought his daughter's charms would make a more forcible impression, if her lover remained in ignorance of them till his return from the continent.

Enter SERVANT, L. 1. E.

SERV. Mr. Doricourt, sir, has been at Counsellor Pleadwell's, and gone about five minutes.

SAVIL. Five minutes! Zounds! I have been five minutes too late all my lifetime;—Good morrow, Courtall; I must pursue him.
(going, L.)

COURT. Promise to dine with me to-day ; I have some honest fellows. *(going off, R.)*

SAVIL. Can't promise ; perhaps I may. *(looking off, L.)*
See there ; there's a bevy of female Patagonians coming down upon us.

COURT. By the Lord, then, it must be my strapping cousins. I dare not look behind me. Run, man, run !
Exeunt R. 1. E.

SCENE II.—*An Apartment at Doricourt's (1. G.)*

Enter DORICOURT, R. 1. E.

DORI. *(speaking to a servant without, R.)* I shall be too late for St. James's ; bid him come immediately.

Enter SAVILLE, L. 1. E.

Most fortunate ! My dear Saville, let the warmth of this embrace speak the pleasure of my heart.

SAVIL. Well, this is some comfort, after the scurvy reception I met with in your hall. I prepared my mind, as I came up stairs, for a *bon jour*, a grimace, and an *adieu*.

DORI. Why so ?

SAVIL. Judging of the master from the rest of the family. What the devil is the meaning of that flock of foreigners below, with their parchment faces and snuffy whiskers ? What ! can't an Englishman stand behind your carriage, buckle your shoe, or brush your coat ?

DORI. Stale, my dear Saville, stale ! Englishmen make the best soldiers, citizens, artisans, and philosophers in the world, but the very worst footmen.

SAVIL. A good excuse for a bad practice.

SAVIL. Now to start a subject which must please you. When do you expect Miss Hardy ?

DORI. O, the hour of expectation is past. She is arrived, and I this morning had the honour of an interview at Pleadwell's. The writings were ready ; and, in obedience to the will of Mr. Hardy, we met to sign and seal.

SAVIL. Has the event answered ? Did your heart leap or sink, when you beheld your mistress.

DORI. Faith, neither one nor t'other, : she's a fine girl, as far as mere flesh and blood goes. But——

SAVIL. But what?

DORI. Why, she's *only* a fine girl; complexion, shape, and features; nothing more.

SAVIL. Is not that enough?

DORI. No! she should have spirit! fire! *l'air enjoué!* that something, that nothing, which everybody feels, and which nobody can describe, in the resistless charmers of Italy and France.

SAVIL. Thanks to the parsimony of my father, that kept me from travel! I would not have lost my relish for true, unaffected English beauty, to have been quarrelled for by all the belles of Versailles and Florence.

DORI. Pho! thou hast no taste; English beauty! 'Tis insipidity; it wants the zest, it wants poignancy, Frank! Why, I have known a French woman, indebted to nature for no one thing but a pair of decent eyes, reckon in her suite as many counts, marquises, and *petits maitres*, as would satisfy three dozen of our first-rate toasts. I have known an Italian marquisina make ten conquests in stepping from her carriage, and carry her slaves from one city to another, whose real, intrinsic beauty would have yielded to half the little grisettes that pace your Park on a Sunday.

SAVIL. And, has Miss Hardy nothing of this?

DORI. If she has, she was pleased to keep it to herself. I was in the room half an hour before I could catch the colour of her eyes; and every attempt to draw her into conversation occasioned so cruel an embarrassment, that I was reduced to the necessity of news, French fleets, and Spanish captures, with her father. However, I have engaged myself.

SAVIL. So Miss Hardy, with only beauty, modesty, and merit, is doomed to the arms of a husband who will despise her.

DORI. You are unjust. Though she has not inspired me with violent passion, my honour secures her felicity.

SAVIL. Come, come, Doricourt; you know very well that when the honour of a husband is *locum tenens* for

his heart, his wife must be as indifferent as himself, if she is not unhappy.

DORI. Pho! never moralize without spectacles. But, as we are upon the tender subject, how did you bear Touchwood's carrying Lady Frances?

SAVIL. You know I looked up to her only with humble hope; and Sir George is every way worthy of her.

DORI. *A la mode anglaise*, a philosopher—even in love. I dine at Hardy's, and shall be at the masquerade in the evening; but breakfast with me to-morrow, and we'll talk of our old companions—for I swear to you, Saville, the air of the continent has not effaced one youthful prejudice or attachment.

SAVIL. With an exception to the case of ladies and servants.

DORI. True; there I plead guilty.

Exeunt DORICOURT and SAVILLE, R.

SCENE III.—(3 G.) *Apartment in Mr. Hardy's house.*

Portrait of Letitia on R. F.—Tables and chairs, L.—VILLERS seated on a sofa, R., reading.

Enter FLUTTER, L. 1. E.

FLUT. Ha, Villers, have you seen Mrs. Rackett?—Miss Hardy, I find is out.

VILL. I have not seen her yet. I have made a voyage to Lapland since I came in. (*flinging away the book*) A lady at her toilet is as difficult to be moved as a Quaker. (*yawning*) What events have happened in the world since yesterday? have you heard?

FLUT. O, yes; I stopped at Tattersall's, as I came by, and there I found Lord James Jessamy, Sir William Wilding, and Mr.— But now I think on't, you shan't know a syllable of the matter; for I have been informed you never believe above one half of what I say. (X'S R.)

VILL. My dear fellow, somebody has imposed upon you most egregiously! Half? Why, I never believe one tenth part of what you say; that is, according to the plain and literal expression; but, as I understand you, your intelligence is amusing.

FLUT. That's very hard, now; very hard. I never related a falsity in my life, unless I stumbled on it by mistake; and if it were otherwise, your dull matter-of-fact people are infinitely obliged to those warm imaginations which soar into fiction to amuse you; for, positively, the common events of this little dirty world are not worth talking about, unless you embellish them!—Ha! here comes Mrs. Rackett. Adieu to weeds, I see! All life!

Enter MRS. RACKETT, L. 1. E.

Enter, madam, in all your charms! Villers has been abusing your toilet for keeping you so long; but I think we are much obliged to it—and so are you.

MRS. R. How so, pray? Good morning to you both. Here, here's a hand a-piece for you. (*X's to c., they kiss her hands.*)

FLUT. (R.) How so? Because to your toilette you owe so many beauties.

MRS. R. Delightful compliment! What do you think of that, Villers?

VILL. (L.) That he and his compliments are alike—showy, but won't bear examining. So you brought Miss Hardy to town last night?

MRS. R. Yes; I should have brought her before, but I had a fall from my horse that confined me a week. I suppose, in her heart, she wished me hanged a dozen times an hour.

FLUT. Why?

MRS. R. Had she not an expecting lover in town all the time? She is gone to meet him this morning at the lawyer's. I hope she'll charm him; she's the sweetest girl in the world.

VILL. Vanity, like murder, will out. You have convinced me you think yourself more charming.

MRS. R. How can that be?

VILL. No woman ever praises another, unless in the very perfections, she allows she thinks herself superior.

FLUT. And no man ever rails at the sex, unless he is conscious he deserves their hatred.

Mrs. R. Thank ye, Flutter—I'll owe you a bouquet for that; I am going to visit the new-married Lady Frances Touchwood. Who knows her husband?

FLUT. Everybody.

Mrs. R. Is there not something odd in his character?

VILL. Why, yes! he is passionately fond of his wife. But so petulant in his love, that he opened the cage of a favourite bullfinch, and sent it to catch butterflies, because she rewarded its song with a kiss.

Mrs. R. Intolerable monster! Such a brute deserves—

VILL. Nay, nay, nay, nay, this is your sex, now. Give a woman but one trait of character, off she goes, like a ball from a racket—sees the whole being, marks him down for an angel or a devil, and so exhibits him to all her acquaintance. This monster, this brute, is one of the worthiest fellows upon earth; sound sense and a liberal mind; but dotes on his wife to such excess, that he quarrels with everything she admires, and is jealous of her tippet and nosegay.

Mrs. R. O, less love for me, kind Cupid! I can see no difference between the torment of such an affection and hatred.

FLUT. O, pardon me; inconceivable difference—inconceivable; I see it as clearly as your bracelet. In the one case, the tyrant would say, as Mr. Snapper said t'other day, "Zounds! madam, do you suppose that *my* table, and *my* house, and *my* pictures"—*apropos* pictures! There was the divinest Plague of Athens sold yesterday in Pall Mall! the dead figures so natural—you would have sworn they were alive. Lord Primrose bid five hundred. "Six," said Lady Carmine. A "thousand," said Ingot, the nabob. Down went the hammer. "A rouleau for your bargain," said Sir Jeremy Jingle. And what answer do you think Ingot made him?

Mrs. R. Why, took the offer.

FLUT. "Sir, I would oblige you, but my children have got Whittington and his Cat in the nursery; just this size, and they'll make a good match."

Mrs. R. Ha, ha, ha! Well, I protest, that's just the

way now; the nabobs and their wives outbid one at every sale, and the creatures have no more taste——

VILL. There, off you go again, on character. You forget that this story is told by Flutter, who always remembers everything but the persons and the circumstances; 'twas Ingot who offered a rouleau for the bargain, and Sir Jeremy Jingle who made the reply.

FLUT. Egad, I believe you are right—but the story's as good one way as t'other. Good morning; I am going to Mrs. Crotchet's. (*X's to L.*)

VILL. I'll venture every figure in your tailor's bill you make some blunder there.

FLUT. (*turning back*) Done! my tailor's bill has not been paid these three years; and I'll open my mouth with as much care as Mrs. Bridget Button, who wears a cork plumper in each cheek, and never hazards more than two words, for fear of showing them. (*Exit L. 1. E.*)

MRS. R. 'Tis a good-natured, insignificant creature, let in everywhere and cared for nowhere. Ah, Miss Hardy, returned from the lawyar's, she seems rather flurried.

VILL. Then I leave you to your communications.

Enter LETITIA, L. 1. E.

Adieu! I am rejoiced to see you so well, Miss Hardy, I must tear myself away.

LETI. Don't vanish in a moment.

VILL. I beg quarter! you are the two most dangerous women in town. Staying to be shot at by four such eyes is equal to a *rencontre* with Paul Jones, or a midnight march to Omoa! (*aside.*) They'll swallow the nonsense for the sake of the compliment. (*Exit L. 1. E.*)

LETI. (*R.*) And this odious dress—how unbecoming it is! I was bewitched to choose it. (*throwing herself on a chair L. and looking in a pocket glass, MRS. RACKETT on sofa R., staring at her*) Did you ever see such a fright as I am to-day?

MRS. R. Why, I have seen you look rather worse.

LETI. How can you be so provoking? If I do not look this morning worse than ever I looked in my life, I

am naturally a fright. You shall have it which way you will.



MRS. R. Just as you please ; but pray what is the meaning of all this ?

LETI. (*rising*) Men are all dissemblers, flatterers, deceivers ! Have I not heard, a thousand times, of my hair, my eyes, and my shape—all made for victory ; and to-day, when I bent my whole heart on one poor conquest, I have proved that all those imputed charms amount to nothing, for—Doricourt saw them unmoved. A husband of fifteen months could not have examined me with more cutting indifference.

MRS. R. Why then, return it, like a wife of fifteen months, and be as indifferent as he.

LETI. Ay, there's the sting ! The blooming boy that left his image in my young heart is, at four-and-twenty, improved in every grace that fixed him there. It is the same face that my memory or my fancy constantly painted ; but its expression more heightened, and its graces more finished. How mortifying, to feel myself at the same moment his slave, and an object of perfect indifference to him ! (*x's to R.*)

MRS. R. How are you certain that is the case ? Did you expect him to kneel down to make oath of your beauty before your father, the lawyer, and his clerk ?

LETI. No ; but he should have looked as if a sudden

ray had pierced him—he should have been breathless, speechless, for oh, Caroline, all this was I!

MRS. R. I am sorry you were such a fool. Can you expect a man, who has seen half the fine women in Europe, to feel like a young master who has just left boarding-school? He is the most interesting fellow you have seen, and bewilders your imagination; but he has seen a thousand pretty women, child, before he saw you, and his romantic fancies have been over long ago.

LETI. Your raillery distresses me—but I will touch his *heart*, or never to be his wife.

MRS. R. If you have no reason to believe his heart pre-engaged, be satisfied; if he is a man of honour, you'll have nothing to complain of in his conduct.

LETI. Nothing to complain of? Shall I marry the man I adore, with such an expectation as that?

MRS. R. And, when you have fretted yourself pale, my dear, you will have mightily heightened your chance of success.

LETI. (*pausing*) Yet I have one hope. If there is any power whose peculiar care is faithful love, that power I invoke to aid me.

Enter MR. HARDY, R. 1. E.

HARDY. (*X's to c.*) Well, now, wasn't I right? Eh, Letty! Eh, cousin Rackett! wasn't I right? I knew 'twould be so. He was all agog to see her before he went abroad, and if he had, he'd have thought no more of her face, may be, than his own.

MRS. R. (*L.*) May be, not half so much.

HARDY. (*C.*) Ay, may be so; but I see things beforehand. He, he! I foresaw exactly to-day, then, that he would fall desperately in love with the wench.

LETI. (*R.*) Indeed, sir! how did you perceive it?

HARDY. That's a pretty question! How do I perceive everything? How did I foresee the fall of corn and the rise of taxes? How did I foretell that a war would sink the funds? How did I forewarn Parson Homily that if he didn't some way or other contrive to get more votes than Rubric, he'd lose the lecture-

ship? How did I—but what makes you so dull, Letitia? I thought to have found you popping about, as brisk as the jacks of your harpsichord!

LETI. Surely, sir, 'tis a very serious occasion.

HARDY. Pho! pho! girls should never be grave before marriage. How was you, cousin, beforehand, eh?

MRS. R. Why, exceedingly full of care. I could not sleep for thinking of my coach and my liveries; the taste of the clothes I should be presented in distracted me for a week; and whether I should be married in white or lilac gave me the most cruel anxiety.

LETI. And is it possible that you had no other care?

HARDY. And pray, what may your cares be, Mrs. Letitia? I foresee, now, it will turn out that you have taken a dislike to Doricourt.

LETI. Indeed, sir, I have not.

HARDY. Then what's all this melancholy about? Are you not going to be married? and what's more, to a sensible man? and what's more, too, a young girl, to a handsome man? What's all this melancholy for, I say?

MRS. R. Why, only because she's over head and ears in love with him; which, it seems, your foreknowledge had not told you a word of.

LETI. Fie, Caroline!

HARDY. Well, come, tell me what's the matter then. If you don't like him, hang signing and sealing—he shan't have you; and yet I can't say that either; for, you know, that estate that cost his father and me upwards of fourscore thousand pounds, must go all to him if you won't have him; if he won't have you, indeed, 'twill be all yours. All that's clearly engrossed on parchment, and the poor dear man set his hand to it whilst he was a-dying. "So," said I, "I foresee you'll never live to see them married; but their first son shall be christened Jeremiah, after you—that I promise you." But come, I say, what is the matter? Do you really not like him?

LETI. I fear, sir—if I must speak—I fear, I was less agreeable in Mr. Doricourt's eyes than he appeared in mine.

HARDY. There you are mistaken ; for I asked him, and he told me he liked you very well. (to MRS. R.) Don't you think he must have taken a fancy to my Letitia ?

MRS. R. Why, really, I think so, as—I was not present.

LETI. My dear sir, I am convinced he has not ; but if there is spirit or invention in woman, he shall.

HARDY. Right, girl ; go away to your toilet——

LETI. It is not my toilet that can serve me ; but a plan has struck me, which, if you will not oppose it, flatters me with brilliant success.

HARDY. Oppose it ! Not I, indeed. What is it ?

LETI. Why, sir, it may seem at first a little paradoxical ; but as he does not like me enough, I want him to like me still less, and will, at our next interview, endeavour to heighten his indifference into dislike.

HARDY. What conjurer could have foreseen that ?

MRS. R. (x's c.) Is this love-witchery ? Letitia, are you serious ?

LETI. (R.) As serious as the most important event of my life demands.

MRS. R. (C.) Why endeavour to make him dislike you ?

LETI. Because 'tis much easier to convert a sentiment into its opposite, than to transform indifference into tender passion.

MRS. R. Let me see ; a quality may be changed, but *nothing* cannot be turned into *something*. Well, that may be good philosophy, but I'm afraid you'll find it, like other philosophy, a bad practical speculation.

LETI. I have the strongest confidence in it. I am inspired with unusual spirits, and on this hazard willingly stake my chance for happiness. I am impatient to begin.

(Exit LETITIA, R.)

HARDY. (L.) Can you foresee the end, cousin ?

MRS. R. (R.) No, sir ; nothing less than your penetration can ; and I can't stay now to consider it. I am going to call on Miss Ogle, and then on Lady Frances Touchwood, and then to an auction, and then—I don't know where ; but I shall be at home time enough to witness their next extraordinary interview. Good bye.

(Exit MRS. RACKETT, L.)

HARDY. Well, 'tis odd; I can't understand it; but I foresee Letty will have her way, and so I shan't give myself the trouble to dispute it. (*Exit HARDY, R.*)

SCENE IV.—(3. G.) *Sir George Touchwood's House. Sofa on R. Two chairs on R. and L. C., and two chairs on L.*

Enter DORICOURT and SIR GEORGE TOUCHWOOD, R.

DORI. Married! Ha, ha, ha! you, whom I heard in Paris say such things of the sex, are in London—a married man.

SIR G. The sex is still what it has ever been, since *la petite morale* banished substantial virtues; and rather than have given my name to one of your high-bred, fashionable dames, I'd have crossed the line in a fire-ship, and married a Japanese.

DORI. Yet you have married an English beauty; yea, and a beauty born in high life.

SIR G. True; but she has a simplicity of heart and manners that would become the fair Hebrew damsels toasted by the Patriarchs.

DORI. Ha, ha! Why, thou art a downright matrimonial Quixote. My life on't, she becomes as mere a town lady in six months as though she had been bred to the trade.

SIR G. Common—common! (*contemptuously.*) No, sir; Lady Frances despises high life so much, from the ideas I have given her, that she'll live in it like a salamander in fire.

DORI. Introduce me to this phoenix; I came on purpose.

SIR G. Introduce! O, ay, to be sure; I believe Lady Frances is engaged just now—but—another time. (*aside*) How handsome the dog looks to-day!

DORI. Another time—but I have no other time. 'Sdeath, this is the only hour I can command this fortnight.

SIR G. (*aside*) I'm very glad to hear it. So then you can't dine with us to-day? That's very unlucky.

DORI. Dinner—why yes—as to dinner—yes, I can, I believe, contrive to dine with you to-day.

SIR G. Pshaw! I meant supper—you can't sup with us?

DORI. Supper? dinner alone made me hesitate, supper will be convenient. But you are fortunate—if you had asked me any other night, I could not have come.

SIR G. To-night! What a blunderer I am; now I recollect, we are particularly engaged to-night! But to-morrow ——

DORI. Why, lookye, Sir George, 'tis very plain you have no inclination to let me see your wife at all; so here I sit. (*throws himself on the sofa, L.*) There's my hat, and here are my legs—now I shan't stir till I have seen her; and I have no engagements. I'll breakfast, dine, and sup with you every day this week!



SIR G. (*aside*) Was there ever such a provoking wretch! But to be plain with you, Doricourt, you are an inconveniently agreeable fellow, and the women, I observe, always simpler when you appear. For these reasons, in truth I had rather, when you meet me with Lady Frances that you should forget that we are acquainted, further than a nod, a smile, or a how d'ye?

DORI. What next!

SIR G. It is not merely yourself, in *propria persona*, that I object to, but if you are intimate here, you'll make my house still more the fashion than it is—and it is already so much so, that my doors are of no use to me.

I married Lady Frances to engross her to myself, yet, such is the freedom of modern manners, that, in spite of me, her eyes, thoughts, and conversation, are continually divided amongst all the flirts and coxcombs of fashion.

DORI. To be sure, I confess that kind of freedom is carried rather too far. 'Tis hard one can't have a jewel in one's cabinet but the whole town must be gratified with its lustre. (*aside*) He shan't preach me out of seeing his wife, though.

SIR G. Well, now, that's reasonable. When you take time to reflect, Doricourt, I always observe you decide right, and therefore I hope —

Enter GIBSON, R. 1. E.

GIBSON. Sir, my lady desires —

SIR G. I am particularly engaged.

DORI. O Lord, let that be no excuse, I beg! (*leaping from the sofa, R.*) Lead the way, Gibson, I'll attend your lady. (*Exit, following* GIBSON, R. 1. E.

SIR G. What evil genius possessed me to talk about her! Here, Doricourt! (*running after him, R.*) Doricourt! (*Exit* SIR GEORGE, R. 1. E.

Enter MRS. RACKETT and MISS OGLE, followed by a SERVANT, L. 1. E.

MRS. R. (R.) Acquaint your lady that Mrs. Rackett and Miss Ogle are here. (SERVANT \times 's behind, and exit R. 1. E.)

MISS O. (L.) I shall hardly know Lady Frances, 'tis so long since I was in Shropshire.

MRS. R. And I'll be sworn you never saw her out of Shropshire. Her father kept her locked up with his caterpillars and shells, and loved her beyond anything but a blue butterfly and a petrified frog.

MISS O. Ha, ha, ha! Well, 'twas a cheap way of bringing her up. You know he was very poor, though a lord, and very high-spirited, though a virtuoso. Her operas, and robes de cour in town, would have swallowed his sea-weeds, moths, and monsters in one season. Sir

George, I find, thinks his wife a most extraordinary creature: but his greatest boast is, that he has taught her to despise everything like fashionable life.

MRS. R. Has he; so there's a great impertinence in all that. We must do ourselves justice. Let us, in spite to him, immediately try to give her a taste for that high life, which merits not such treatment.

MISS O. Agreed; 'tis just what I wish. She comes.

Enter LADY FRANCES TOUCHWOOD R. 1. E.

LADY F. I beg ten thousand pardons, my dear Mrs. Rackett (x's c.) Miss Ogle, I rejoice to see you; I should have come to you sooner, but I was detained in conversation by Mr. Doricourt.

MRS. R. (R.) Pray make no apology; I am quite happy that we have your ladyship in town at last. What stay do you make?

LADY F. (C.) A short one! Sir George talks with regret of the scenes we have left; and as the ceremony of presentation is over, will, I believe, soon return.

MISS O. (L.) He can't be so cruel. Does your ladyship wish to return so soon?

LADY F. I have not the habit of consulting my own wishes; but I think, if they decide, we should not return immediately. I have yet hardly formed an idea of London.

MRS. R. I shall quarrel with your lord and master if he dares to think of depriving us of you so soon. How do you dispose of yourself to-day?

LADY F. Sir George is going with me this morning to the mercer's to choose a silk and then——

MRS. R. Choose a silk? Ha, ha, ha! Sir George chooses your laces too, I hope; your gloves, and your pincushions!

LADY F. Madam——

MRS. R. I am glad, however, that you blush, my dear Lady Frances—these are strange, homespun ways! If you act thus, pray keep it secret! Suppose the town were to know that your husband chooses your gowns!

MISS O. You are very young, my lady, and have been

brought up in solitude. The maxims you learned among wood nymphs, won't pass current here, I assure you.

MRS. R. Why, my dear creature, you look quite frightened.—Come, you shall go with us to drop a few cards, then to an auction room, then we'll drive to Kensington; we shall be at home by five to dress; and in the evening I'll attend you to the masquerade.

LADY F. I shall be very happy, if Sir George has no engagements, to be one of your party.

MRS. R. What! Do you stand so low in your own opinion, that you dare not trust yourself without Sir George? You should have staid in the country, if you choose to play Darby and Joan, my dear; 'tis an exhibition not calculated for London, I assure you.

MISS O. I suppose, my lady, you and Sir George will be seen pacing it comfortably round the Green Park—arm in arm, and then, go lovingly into the same carriage; dine *tete-a-tete*, spend the evening at piquet, and so go soberly to bed at eleven!—Such a snug plan may do for an attorney and his wife; but for Lady Frances Touchwood, 'tis as unsuitable as linsey-woolsey, or a black bonnet at the opera!

LADY F. These are rather new doctrines to me!—But, my dear Mrs. Rackett, you and Miss Ogle must judge of these things better than I can. As you observe, I am but young, and may have caught absurd opinions. Here is Sir George. (×'s to R.)

Re-enter SIR GEORGE TOUCHWOOD, R. 1 E.

SIR G. (*aside*) 'Sdeath, another room full!

LADY F. My love! Mrs. Rackett—Miss Ogle.

MRS. R. (SIR G. ×'sto MRS. R.) Give you joy, Sir George. We came to rob you of Lady Frances for a few hours.

SIR G. A few hours!

LADY F. (R.) O, yes! I am going to make calls—to an auction-room, and the Park, and a hundred places! It is quite ridiculous, I find, for married people to be always together—we shall be laughed at.

SIR G. (R. c.) I am astonished!—Mrs. Rackett, what does the dear creature mean?

MRS. R. (c.) Mean, Sir George!—what the dear creature says, I imagine.

MISS O. (L.) Why, you know, sir, as Lady Frances had the misfortune to be bred entirely in the country, she cannot be supposed to be versed in fashionable life.

SIR G. No, Heaven forbid she should! If she had, madam, she would never have been my wife.

MRS. R. Can you be serious?

SIR G. Perfectly so. I should never have had the courage to have married a fine lady.

MISS O. (*sneeringly*) Pray, sir, what do you take a fine lady to be, that you express such fear of her?

SIR G. A being easily described, madam, as she is seen everywhere—but in her own house. She sleeps at home, but she lives—all over the town. In her mind every sentiment gives place to the passion for conquest, and the vanity of being particular. The feelings of wife and mother are lost in the whirl of dissipation. If she continues virtuous—she is fortunate, and if she brings not ruin on her husband, 'tis by her dexterity at the card table!—such a woman I take to be a perfect fine lady.

MRS. R. And you I take to be a slanderous Cynic of two and thirty—twenty years hence, one might have forgiven such a defamation! Now, sir, hear my definition of a fine lady—she is a creature for whom Nature has done much, and education more; she has taste, elegance, spirit, understanding. In her manner she is free, in her morals nice. Her behaviour is undistinguishingly polite to her husband and to all others; her sentiments are for their hours of retirement. In a word, a fine lady is the life of conversation, the spirit of society, the joy of the public; pleasure follows whenever she appears, and the kindest wishes attend her through life. Make haste, then, my dear Lady Frances, commence fine lady, and so force your husband to acknowledge the correctness of my picture.

LADY F. (R.) 'Tis a delightful one. How can you dislike it, Sir George? You painted fashionable life in colours so disgusting, that I thought I hated it, but, on a nearer view, it seems charming. I have hitherto lived in obscurity—'tis time that I should be a woman of the

world. I long to begin—my heart pants with expectation and delight! (×'s to R. c.)

MRS. R. Come, then, let us begin directly. I am impatient to introduce you to that society which you were born to ornament and charm.

LADY F. (to SIR G.) Adieu, my love! we shall meet again at dinner (×'s L. c. *going*)

SIR G. Sure I am in a dream—Fanny!

LADY F. (*returning*) Sir George!

SIR G. Will you go without me? (×'s to c.)

MRS. R. Will you go without me! Ha, ha, ha! what a pathetic address! Why, sure you would not always be seen side by side, like two beans on a stalk. Are you afraid to trust Lady Frances with me, sir?

SIR G. Heaven and earth, with whom can a man trust his wife, in the present state of society? Formerly there were distinctions of character amongst ye—every class of females had its particular description; grandmothers were pious, aunts circumspect, old maids censorious—but now, aunts, grandmothers, girls, and maiden gentlewomen are all the same creature, a wrinkle more or less is the sole difference between ye.

MRS. R. That maiden gentlewomen have lost their censoriousness is surely not in your catalogue of grievances?

SIR G. Indeed it is—and ranked amongst the most serious grievances. Things went well, madam, when the tongues of three or four old maids kept all the wives and daughters of a parish in awe. They were the dragons that guarded the Hesperian fruit, and I wonder they have not been obliged by act of Parliament to resume their function.

MRS. R. Ha, ha, ha! and pensioned, I suppose, for making strict inquiries into the lives and conversations of their neighbours?

SIR G. With all my heart; and empowered to oblige every woman to conform her conduct to her real situation. You, for instance, are a widow; your air should be sedate, your dress grave, your deportment matronly, and in all things an example to the young women growing up

about you! Instead of which, you are dressed for conquest; think of nothing but ensnaring hearts; are a wit, and a fine lady.

MRS. R. Bear witness to what he says! A wit and fine lady! Who would have expected such a eulogy from such an ill-natured mortal? Valour to a soldier, wisdom to a judge, or glory to a prince, is not more than such a character to a woman.

MISS O. Sir George, I see, languishes for the charming society of a century and a half ago; when a grave squire, and a still graver dame, surrounded by a sober family, formed a stiff group, in a mouldy old house, in the corner of a park.

MRS. R. Delightful serenity! Undisturbed by any noise but the cawing of rooks, and the quarterly rumbling of an old family coach on a state visit; with the happy intervention of a friendly call from the parish apothecary, or the curate's wife, with her formal curtsy, and her "How do you do, ma'am?" (*curtseying stiffly*)

SIR G. And what is the society of which *you* boast? A mere chaos; in which all distinction of rank is lost—in a ridiculous affectation of ease, and every different order of beings is huddled together. In the same *select party*, you will often find the wife of a bishop and a sharper, of an earl and a fiddler. In short 'tis one universal masquerade, but where all assume the same disguise of dress and manners.

Enter SERVANT, L. 1 E.

SERV. Mr. Flutter.

(*Exit*, L. 1 E.)

SIR G. Here comes an illustration. Now, I defy you to tell, from his appearance, whether Flutter is a privy counsellor or a mercer, a lawyer or a grocer's apprentice.

Enter FLUTTER, L. 1 E.

FLUT. O, just which you please, Sir George, so you don't make me a lord mayor. Ah, Mrs. Rackett! Lady Frances, (*x's to R. C.*) your most obedient; you look—now hang me, if that's not provoking—had your dress been another colour, I should have said the prettiest thing you ever heard in your life.

MISS O. Pray give it us.

FLUT. I was yesterday at Mrs. Bloomer's. She was dressed all in green; no other colour to be seen but that of her face and neck. So, says I, my dear Mrs. Bloomer, you look a carnation just beginning to burst its green pod. Wasn't that pretty?

SIR G. And what said her husband?

FLUT. Her husband? Why, her husband laughed, and said a cucumber would have been a better simile.

SIR G. But there *are* husbands, sir, who, rather than have amended your comparison, would have considered it as an impertinence.

FLUT. Why, what harm can there be in compliments? They keep up the spirits. You, Sir George, cannot fear they may be mischievous, who, of all people breathing, have reason to be convinced of your lady's attachment; everybody talks of it: that little bird there, that she killed out of jealousy—the most extraordinary instance of affection that ever was given.

LADY F. I kill a bird through jealousy? Heavens! Mr. Flutter, how can you impute such a cruelty to me?

SIR G. I could have forgiven you, if you had.

FLUT. O, what a blundering fool I am! No, no,—now I remember,—'twas your bird, Lady Frances—that's it, your bullfinch, which Sir George, in one of the refinements of his passion, sent into the wide world to seek its fortune—he took it for a knight in disguise.

LADY F. Is it possible? O Sir George, could I have imagined it was you who deprived me of a creature I was so fond of!

SIR G. Mr. Flutter, (FLUTTER *x's* to SIR GEORGE,) you are one of those busy, idle, meddling people, who, from mere vacuity of mind, are the most dangerous inmates in a family; who have neither feelings nor opinions of their own, but like an echo convey those of every blockhead who comes in their way, and thinking themselves excused because they *mean* no harm, though broken friendships, discords and murders are the consequences of their indiscretion. (*x's* to L.)

FLUT. (*taking out his tablets*) Vacuity of mind! What

was next? I'll write down this sermon; 'tis the first I have heard since my grandmother's funeral. (*goes up, writing.*)

MISS O. Come, Lady Frances, you see what a cruel creature your loving husband can be; so let us leave him.

SIR G. Madam,—Lady Frances shall not go.

LADY F. *Shall* not, Sir George? This is the first time such an expression—(*weeping.*)

SIR G. My love! my life!

LADY F. Don't imagine I'll be treated like a child!—denied what I wish, and then pacified with sweet words.

MISS O. (*apart*) The bullfinch! that's an excellent subject; never let it down.

LADY F. I see plainly you would deprive me of every pleasure of society, as well as of my sweet bird—out of pure love. Barbarous man!

SIR G. 'Tis well, madam; your resentment of that circumstance proves to me, what I did not before suspect, that you are deficient both in tenderness and understanding. Tremble to think the hour approaches in which you would give the world for such a proof of my love. (*×'s to R.*) Go, madam; give yourself to the public; abandon your heart to dissipation, and see if in the scenes of gaiety and folly that await you you can find a recompense for the lost affection of a doting husband.

(*Exit, R. 1 E.*)

FLUT. (R.) Lord, what a fine thing it is to have the gift of speech!

LADY F. He is really angry; I cannot go.

MRS. R. Not go! foolish creature! you are arrived at the moment which, some time or other, was sure to happen, and everything depends on the use you make of it.

MISS O. Come, Lady Frances, don't hesitate; the minutes are precious.

LADY F. I could find in my heart—and yet I won't give up neither. If I should in this instance, he'll expect it for ever.

MISS O. There, you act now like a woman of spirit.

(*Exeunt LADY F., MRS. R., and MISS OGLE, L. 1. E.*)

FLUT. A fair tug, by Jupiter—between duty and pleasure! Pleasure beats, and off we go. Io triumphe!
(*Exit* L. 1 E.)

END OF ACT.

ACT II.

SCENE I.—(*Same as Scene III. Act I.*)—(3. G.) —*Table and chairs* L.—*Table and chairs* R.—*Sofa* R. C.

Enter MRS. RACKETT, L. 1. E., and LETITIA, R.

MRS. R. Come, prepare, prepare—your lover is coming.

LETI. My lover! confess now that my absence at dinner was a severe mortification to him.

MRS. R. I am not absolutely sure that it spoiled his appetite; he ate as if he was hungry, and drank his wine as though he liked it.

LETI. What was the apology?

MRS. R. That you were indisposed; but I gave him a hint that your extreme bashfulness could not support his eye.

LETI. If I comprehend him, awkwardness is no less than bashfulness, one of the last faults he can pardon in a woman; so expect to see me transformed into the veriest maukin, as a new source of dislike.

MRS. R. You persevere then?

LETI. Certainly. I know the design is rash, and the event important; it either makes Doricourt mine by all the tenderest ties of passion, or deprives me of him for ever; but never to be his wife will afflict me less, than to be his wife and not be beloved.

MRS. R. Then you won't trust to the good old maxim, Marry first, and love will follow?

LETI. As readily as I would venture my last guinea that good fortune might follow. The woman that has not touched the heart before she is lead to the altar, has scarcely a chance of charming it when security prevents her value from being raised by the risk of losing her.

DORICOURT. (*without*, L.) Up-stairs, hey?

LETI. But here he comes. I'll disappear for a moment.
Don't spare me. (*Exit R.*)

MRS. R. Oh, I'll do all the mischief you wish.

Enter DORICOURT, L. 1. E., not seeing MRS. RACKETT.

DORI. So! (*looking at a picture.*) this is my mistress, I presume. *Ma foi!* the painter has hit her off. The downcast eye—the blushing cheek—timid—apprehensive—bashful. A tear and a prayer book would have made her *La Bella Magdalena*—

Give me a fair one in whose touching mien
A mind, a soul, a polished art is seen;
Whose gesture speaks, beams intellectual fire,
She speeds the darts which endless love inspire.

MRS. R. Is that an impromptu? (*touching him on the shoulder with her fan.*)

DORI. (*starting*) Madam!—(*aside.*) Finely caught! Not absolutely—I was trying it during the dessert, as a motto for your picture.

MRS. R. Gallantly turned! but wasn't it for Miss Hardy's? I suspect, however, that her charms have made no violent impression—and who can wonder?—the poor girl's defects are so obvious.

DORI. Defects!

MRS. R. Merely those of education. Her father's mismanagement ruined her. *Mauvaise honte*, conceit and ignorance all unite in the charmer you are to marry.

DORI. Marry! I marry *such* a woman! Your picture, I hope, is overcharged. I ally myself to *mauvaise honte*, pertness and ignorance!

MRS. R. Thank Hymen that ugliness and ill temper are not added to the list. You allow she is handsome.

DORI. Half her personal beauty would be sufficient; but were the Medicean Venus changed to marble, and animated for me, and with a vulgar soul, as she awoke to life I should become the statue.

MRS. R. Bless us! We are in a hopeful way, then!

DORI. There must be envy in the widow's description (*aside*) Ha, ha, ha! I must allow for a lady's painting.

(*bows.*) Miss Hardy, I have been assured, though not spirited, is elegant and accomplished.

MRS. R. (*aside*) I'll be even with him for that. Ha, ha, ha! and so you have found me out? Well, I protest I meant no harm; 'twas only to increase the *éclat* of her appearance that I threw a veil over her charms. Here comes the lady; she will herself announce her elegance and accomplishments.

Enter LETITIA, running, R. 1. E.

LETI. La, cousin, do you know that our John—— O, dear heart! I didn't see you, sir. (*hanging down her head, and hiding behind MRS. RACKETT.*)

MRS. R. Fie, Letitia—Mr. Doricourt thinks your manners elegant. Stand forward and confirm his opinion.

LETI. No, no; keep before me. He's my sweetheart, and 'tis impudent to look one's sweetheart in the face, you know.

MRS. R. (*to him*) You'll allow in future for a lady's painting, sir—ha, ha, ha!



DORI. I am astonished.

LETI. Well, hang it, I must take heart at last. Why, he is but a man, you know, cousin—and I'll let him see I wasn't born in a wood to be scared by an owl. (*half apart; advances and looks at him through her fingers*) He, he, he! (*goes up to him and makes an awkward formal curtsy—he bows*) You have been a great traveller, sir, I hear.

DORI. I have travelled, madam.

LETI. Then I wish you'd tell us about the fine sights you saw when you went over sea. I have read in a book, that there are some other countries, where the men and women are all horses. Did you see any of them?

MRS R. (R.) Mr. Doricourt is not prepared, my dear, I fancy, for these inquiries—he is reflecting on the importance of the question, and will answer you—when he can.

LETI. When he can! Why, he's as slow in speech as aunt Margery when she's reading Thomas Aquinas—and stands gaping like mumchance.

MRS. R. Have a little discretion, Miss Hardy, or your lover may not perceive your accomplishments and your elegance.

LETI. Hold your tongue!—Sure I may say what I please before I am married, if I can't afterwards.—D'ye think a body does not know how to talk to a sweetheart? He is not the first I have had.

DORI. (L.) Indeed!

LETI. O, lud, he speaks! (*runs from him*) Why, if you must know, there was the curate at home. When papa was a-hunting, he used to come a-suitoring, and make speeches to me out of books. Nobody knows what a mort of fine things he used to say to me—and call me Venis, and Jubah, and Dinah.

DORI. And pray, fair lady, how did you answer him?

LETI. Why, I used to say, "Look you, Mr. Curate, don't think to come over me with your flimflams, for a better man than ever trod in your shoes is coming over sea to marry me." But 'ifags, I begin to think I was out. Parson Dobbins was the sprightfuler man of the two.

DORI. Surely, this cannot be really Miss Hardy?

LETI. Laws, why don't you know me? You saw me to-day—but I was daunted before my father, and the lawyer, and all them, did not care to speak out—so may be you thought I couldn't; but I can talk as fast as anybody when the ice is broke; and having shown my qualifications, I hope you'll like me the better.

Enter HARDY, R. 1 E.

HARDY. (R.) I foresee this won't do. Mr. Doricourt, maybe you take my daughter for a fool, but you are mistaken; she is as sensible a girl as any in England.

DORI. (L.) She has a very uncommon understanding, sir. (*aside*) I did not think he had been such a blockhead.

LETI. (L. c., *aside*) My father will undo the whole. Laws, papa, how can you think he can take me for a fool, when everybody knows I beat the 'pothecary at conundrums last Christmas-time? And didn't I make a string of names, all in riddles, for the Lady's Diary? There was a little river and a great house; that was Newcastle. There was what a lamb says, and three letters; that was ba, and k-e-r, ker, baker. There was——

HARDY. Don't stand ba-a-ing there—you'll make me mad in a moment. I tell you, sir, that for all that, she's peculiarly sensible.

DORI. Sir, I give all possible credit to your assertions.

LETI. Laws, papa, do come along. If you stand watching, how can my sweetheart break his mind, and tell me how he admires me?

DORI. It is difficult, indeed, madam.

HARDY. I tell you, Letty, I'll have no more of this. I see well enough——

LETI. Laws, don't snub me before my husband that is to be. You'll teach him to snub me too—and I believe by his looks he'd like to begin now. So let us go. (HARDY *pulls her to R.*) Cousin, you may tell the gentleman what a genus I have—(HARDY *pulls her again*)—how I can cut watch papers, and work catgut—(*pulls her again*)—make quadrille baskets with pins, and take profiles in shade. (*Exeunt* HARDY and LETITIA, R., LETITIA *returning*) And I can sing, too; you shall hear. (*sings.*)

Where are you going, my pretty maid?

Where are you going, my pretty maid?

I'm going a milking, sir, she said, sir she said,

I'm going a milking, sir, she said.

Shall I go with you, my pretty maid?

Shall I go with you my pretty maid?

Yes if you please, kind sir, she said, sir she said,
Yes if you please, kind sir she said.

Will you marry me, my pretty maid ?

Will you marry me, my pretty maid ?

Yes, if you please, kind sir, she said, sir she said.

Yes, if you please, kind sir, she said.

What is your fortune, my pretty maid ?

What is your fortune, my pretty maid ?

My face is my fortune, sir, she said, sir she said.

My face is my fortune, sir, she said.

Then I'll not have you, my pretty maid.

Then I'll not have you, my pretty maid.

Nobody axed you, sir, she said, sir, she said.

Nobody axed you, sir, she said.

(Bobs a curtsey, and runs off R.)

MRS. R. What think you of my painting now ?

DORI. Outline, madam. The original outdoes the sketch.

MRS. R. And how does she strike you on the whole ?

DORI. Like a good design spoiled by the incapacity of the artist. Her faults are evidently the result of her father's weak indulgence. I observed an expression in her eye incongruous with the folly of her lips.

MRS. R. But at her age, when education has stopped, and manner is become nature, hopes of improvement——

DORI. Would be absurd. Besides, I can't turn school-master. Doricourt's wife must be incapable of improvement—but it must be, because there is no room for it.

MRS. R. Well, I may congratulate you on perceiving no melancholy in your air from the adventure.

DORI. No, so benign were the stars at the hour of my birth that though misfortunes go plump to the bottom of my heart, yet as when pebbles sink in water, the surface is soon unruffled. I shall certainly set off for the other world or Bath to-night; whether to the one in a chaise and four, or to the other in a tangent from the aperture of a pistol, deserves consideration. *(going, L.)*

MRS. R. Whichsoever of the journeys you take, I entreat you, postpone until to-morrow. You must be at the masquerade to night.

DORI. Masquerade!

MRS. B. Why not? Even should you resolve to visit the other world, you may as well, you know, take leave of this pleasantly.

DORI. Well, ladies are the best philosophers after all. Expect me at the masquerade. *(Exit, L. 1 E.)*

MRS. R. He's a charming fellow—I think Letitia shan't have him. *(going R.)*

Enter HARDY, R. 1 E.

HARDY. What, is he gone?

MRS. R. Yes; and I am glad he is. You would have ruined us! Now I beg, Mr. Hardy, you won't interfere in this business; it is a little out of your way.

(Exit, R. 1 E.)

HARDY. Hang me if I don't, though—I foresee very clearly what will be the end of it if I leave you to yourselves; I'll follow him to the masquerade, and tell him all. Let me see—what shall my dress be? A great mogul?—No. A grenadier?—No—no; that, I foresee, would make a laugh. An ambassador? No, he is all honour! my aim is deception—I'll go as a Jew.

(Exit, R. 1 E.)

SCENE II.—(2 G.)—*Chamber at Courtall's.—Table and two chairs R.—Bell on table.*

Enter COURTALL and SAVILLE, door D. L.

COURT. You shan't go yet—another bottle.

SAVIL. Thy skull, Courtall, is a lady's thimble;—no, an egg shell.

COURT. Nay, then you are gone too; such matter-of-fact men as you, never aspire to similes but in your cups.

SAVIL. No, no; I am tolerably steady, but the fumes of the wine pass directly through thy egg-shell, and

leave thy brain as cool as——Hey! I must be quite sober; my similes fail me.

COURT. Then we'll sit down here, and have one sober bottle.

Enter DICK, R. 1 E.

Bring a bottle and glasses. (*Exit DICK, R. 1 E*

SAVIL. I'll not swallow another drop; though the juice should be the true Falernian.

COURT. By the bright eyes of her you love, you shall drink her health.

Re-enter DICK, R. 1 E., with bottle and glasses.

SAVIL. Ah! (*sitting down*) She I loved is gone.—(*sighing*) She's married! (*Exit DICK, R. 1 E.*

COURT. Then bless your stars you are not her husband! I would be husband to no woman in Europe, who was not rich and ugly.

SAVIL. Wherefore ugly?

COURT. Because she could not have the conscience to exact that admiration which a pretty wife expects; or if she should, her resentments would not make me uneasy, nobody would undertake to revenge her cause.

SAVIL. Thou art a most licentious fellow.

COURT. Still I have great respect for wives—so here's to the prettiest wife in England—Lady Frances Touchwood.

SAVIL. Lady Frances Touchwood! I rise to drink her. (*rises and drinks*) How came Lady Frances into your head? I never knew you to give a woman of high character before. (*sits.*)

COURT. Ah! the wine works again—you are a wag! for you have heard me give half a-dozen women of fashion in England. But what do you take a woman of high character to be? (*sneeringly.*)

SAVIL. Such a lady as Lady Frances Touchwood, sir.

COURT. O, I remember you were an adorer of hers. Why didn't you marry her? Ah! the wine works again—you are a wag.

SAVIL. I had not the arrogance to look so high. Had

my fortune been worthy of her, she should not have been ignorant of my admiration.

COURT. Precious fellow! What, I suppose you would not dare to tell her that you admire her now?

SAVIL. No, nor you.

COURT. By Cupid, I *have* told her so.

SAVIL. Have? Impossible!

COURT. Ha, ha, ha! Is it so?

SAVIL. Why, how did she receive the declaration?

COURT. Why, in the old way; blushed and frowned, and said—she was married.

SAVIL. What amazing things thou art capable of! A Roman would sooner have breathed vows to a vestal, than I have profaned her ears with such a declaration.

COURT. I shall meet her at Lady Brilliant's to-night, where I shall repeat it; and I'd lay my life, under a mask, she'll hear it all without a blush or frown.

SAVIL. (*rising*) You wrong her, sir! She will.

COURT. She will! (*rising*) Nay, I'll venture to lay a round sum that I prevail on her to trust herself with me—only to taste the fresh air—I mean.

SAVIL. Preposterous vanity! from this moment I am convinced that the other victories you boast are as slanderous as your pretended influence with Lady Frances.

COURT. Pretended! How should such a fellow as you now, who never soared beyond a cherry-cheeked daughter of a ploughman in Norfolk, judge of the influence of a man of my figure and style? I could show thee a list, in which there are names to shake thy faith in the whole sex; and to that list I have no doubt of adding the name of Lady——

SAVIL. Hold, sir! My ears cannot bear the profanation; you cannot—dare not approach her! For your life you would not dare mention love to her! Her look would chill the word whilst it hovered on thy licentious lips.

COURT. Whu! whu! Well, we shall see—this evening, by Jupiter, the trial shall be made.

SAVIL. I think thou dar'st not! But my life, my honour, on her purity.
(*Exit*, L. 1. E.)

COURT. Hot-headed fool ! But since he has brought it to this point, I'll try what can be done with her ladyship. (*musings*) "But softly, softly, a moment," cries conscience. "Wilt thou attempt to blemish her character for virtue, merely to keep up my own for vice !" A qualm on such a subject. Pshaw, I have no time to muse on such things, but the means. (*pauses, and rings bell.*) She's frostwork, and the prejudices of education yet strong : ergo, passionate professions will only inflame her pride, and put her on her guard. For other arts then !

Enter DICK, R. 1. E.

DICK, do you know any of the servants at Sir George Touchwood's ?

DICK. Yes, sir, I knows the groom, and one of the housemaids : for the matter o' that, she's my own cousin ; and it was my mother that helped her to the place.

COURT. Do you know Lady Frances's maid ?

DICK. I can't say as how I am acquainted with she.

COURT. Do you know Sir George's valet ?

DICK. No, sir ; but Sally is very thick with Mr. Gibson, Sir George's gentleman.

COURT. Then go there directly, and employ Sally to discover whether her master goes to Lady Brilliant's this evening ; and if he does, the name of the shop that sold his dress.

DICK. Yes, sir.

COURT. Be exact in your intelligence, and come to me at White's. (*X's to R.—Exit DICK, L. 1. E.*) If I cannot otherwise succeed, I will, in the dress of her husband, beguile her to trust herself to me. So fine a woman, the triumph over Saville, are each a sufficient motive ; and united they shall be resistless. (*Exit R. 1. E.*)

SCENE III.—*The Street.* (1. G.)

Enter SAVILLE, L. 1. E.

SAVIL. The air has recovered me ! What have I been doing ? Perhaps my petulence may be the cause of insult

to her whose honour I asserted : his vanity is piqued ; and where women are concerned, Courtall can be a villain.

Enter DICK, L. 1. E., he bows, and crosses to R. hastily.

Ha ! That's his servant ! Dick !

DICK. (*R. returning*) Sir !

SAVIL. Where are you going, Dick ?

DICK. Going ! I am going, sir, where my master sent me.

SAVIL. (*L.*) Well answered—but I have a particular reason for my inquiry, and you must tell me.

DICK. Why, then, sir, I am going to call upon a cousin of mine, that lives at Sir George Touchwood's.

SAVIL. Very well. There, (*gives him money,*) you must make your cousin drink my health. What are you going about ?

DICK. Why, sir, I believe 'tis no harm, or elseways I am sure I would not blab. I am only going to ax if Sir George goes to the masquerade to-night, and what dress he wears.

SAVIL. Enough ! I am going to call there, myself, Dick ; but, though I have a reason for wishing to know how both will be dressed, I cannot well make the enquiry myself. If you will call when you've learnt, and acquaint me with your cousin's intelligence, I'll double the trifle I have given you.

DICK. Oh ! I'll find out and let you know, sir, never fear. You may trust my honour. (*Exit R. 1. E.*)

SAVIL. Surely the occasion may justify the means ; I cannot venture to inform Sir George, or, in endeavouring to prevent uncertain, I shall cause certain mischief. It is doubly my duty to be, and I will be, Lady Frances's guardian. Courtall, I see, is planning an artful scheme ; but Saville shall outplot him. (*Exit R. 1. E.*)

SCENE IV.—(*2. G.*) *Apartment at Sir George Touchwood's.*
Table and two chairs, c.

Enter SIR GEORGE and VILLERS, R. 1. E.

VILL. Why Sir George ; as you quitted Lady Frances,

I perceived tears in her eyes—no severe affliction, I trust, has——

SIR G. (L.) 'Tis I that am afflicted at the departure of my dream of happiness. Lady Frances and I are dis-united.

VILL. (R.) Presto! Why, you have been in town but ten days; deeds of separation follow your arrival, with more than their usual celerity.

SIR G. I mean our minds are disunited. She no longer places her whole delight in me; she has yielded herself to the world!

VILL. Why did you not bring her to town in a cage? Then she might have had no more than a peep at it. But, after all, what has the world done so to offend you? A twelvemonth since you was the gayest fellow in it. If anybody asked who dresses best?—Sir George Touchwood. Who is the most gallant man?—Sir George Touchwood. Who is the most wedded to amusement and dissipation?—Sir George Touchwood. And now Sir George is metamorphosed into a sour censor, and talks of fashionable life with as much bitterness as the old crabbed censor of old Rome.

SIR G. Society wore a different complexion the moment I became possessed of such a jewel as Lady Frances, everything in which I lived with so much *éclat*, became the object of my terror, and I think of the manners of polite life as I do of the atmosphere of a pest-house. My wife is already infected. She was set upon this morning by maids, widows, and bachelors, who carried her off, in spite of my displeasure, in triumph. (X's to R.)

VILL. Had there been no opposition, there would have been no triumph. I have heard the whole story from Mrs. Rackett; and I assure you, Lady Frances didn't enjoy the morning at all: she wished for you fifty times.

SIR G. Indeed!

VILL. Here, she comes to receive your apology; if she is a mere woman, her displeasure will rise in proportion to your contrition. and till you grow careless about her pardon, she won't grant it. However, I'll

leave you. Matrimonial duets are seldom pleasing to auditors.
(*Exit VILLERS, L. 1. E.*)

Enter LADY FRANCES, R. 1. E.

SIR G. The sweet sorrow that glitters in these eyes I cannot bear (*embracing her*) Look cheerfully, you rogue.

LADY F. I cannot look otherwise if you are pleased with me.

SIR G. Well, Fanny, to-day you made your *entrée* in the fashionable world ; tell me honestly the impressions you received.

LADY F. Indeed, Sir George, I was so hurried from place to place that I had not time to scrutinize what my impressions were.

SIR G. That's the very spirit of the life you have chosen.

LADY F. Everybody about me seemed as though they hoped to be happy somewhere else.

SIR G. And you like this ?

LADY F. One must like what the rest of the world likes.

SIR G. Pernicious maxim.

LADY F. But, my dear Sir George, you have not promised to go with me to the masquerade.

SIR G. 'Twould be a shocking indecorum to be seen together, you know.

LADY F. O, no ; I asked Mrs. Rackett, and she told me we might be seen together at the masquerade without being laughed at.

SIR G. Really ?

LADY F. Indeed, I wish it was the fashion for married people to be always in each other's society. For I have more heartfelt satisfaction in an hour's conversation with you, than a month of amusement could give me without you.

SIR G. My sweet creature ! How that confession charms me ! Let us begin the fashion !

LADY F. O, impossible ! We should not gain a single proselyte ; you can't conceive what spiteful things would

be said of us. At Kensington, to-day, a lady, whom we saw at Court when we were presented, met us. She lifted up her hands in amazement. "Bless me!" said she to her companion, "here's Lady Frances without Sir Hurlo! My dear Mrs. Rackett, consider what an important charge you have! Take her home again, or some enchanter on a flying dragon will descend and carry her off." "O," said another, "You may depend upon it she has a clue at her heel, like the peerless Rosamond; her tender swain would never have trusted her so far without means of discovering her."

SIR G. Heaven! How shall innocence preserve its lustre amidst manners so corrupt? My dear Fanny, I feel a sentiment for thee at this moment tenderer than love—more animated than passion. I view thy progress through the infectious regions of Fashion with anxious terror.

Enter GIBSON, L. 1. E.

GIBSON. You talked, sir, something about going to the masquerade?

SIR G. Well.

GIBSON. Isn't it—hav'nt you? I thought you, sir, had forgot to order a dress. (*aside*) What now can it signify to Sarah, what his dress is to be?

LADY F. Well considered, Gibson. Come, will you be a Jew, Turk, or heretic—Chinese emperor or a ballad singer.

SIR G. O, neither, my love; I can't take the trouble to support a character.

LADY F. You'll wear a domino, then. I saw a pink one trimmed with blue, at the shop where I bought my dress. Would you like it?

SIR G. Anything, anything.

LADY F. Then go about it directly, Gibson. (*Exit GIBSON, L. 1. E.*) A pink domino, trimmed with blue, and a hat of the same. Come, you have not seen my dress yet—it is most beautiful: I long to have it on.

(*Exeunt SIR GEORGE and LADY FRANCES, R. 1. E.*)

SCENE V.—*A Grand Masquerade—Handsome palace arches, backed with palace, in (4 and 6 a.)—chandeliers. Music—A party of sixteen discovered dancing cotillions in front and rear, other CHARACTERS pass and re-pass.*

MOUNTEBANK. Who'll buy my nostrums? Who'll buy my nostrums, who'll buy?

MASK. What are they? *(All gather round him.)*

MOUNT. Different sorts, for different customers! Here's an excellent powder for ladies—queuches the rage for gaming, by making them sleep at night. Here's a narcotic for members of parliament, produces repose in every state of the conscience. Husbands, here's an eye-water—it thickens the visual membrane, through which they see too clearly—good for jealousy. Here's a corroborant for the clergy, provided they effect an advantageous change of living. Here's—but where shall I find it?—Oh! here's a quieting draught for lawyers, a great promoter of modesty. Projectors, here's a decoction, dissipating airy castles, by rectifying the fumes of an empty stomach.

MASK. Mr. Mountebank! Have you no ambition for young heirs, whose uncles and fathers are stout and healthy?

MOUNT. Yes; and I have an infusion for creditors—it gives resignation and humility, when fine gentlemen break their promises, or plead their privilege.

MASK. Come along—come along—here are customers for your whole cargo. *(They retire up, c.)*

Enter HARDY from R. U. E., in the dress of Isaac Mendoza. Music ceases.

VILL. *(masked, advances R.)* What! my little Isaac! How the deuce came you here? Where's your duenna, old Margaret?

HARDY. O, I have got rid of her.

VILL. How?

HARDY. Why, I persuaded a young Irishman that she was a blooming plump beauty of eighteen; so they made an elopement, ha, ha, ha! and she is now the toast of Tipperary.—(*aside, looking off, R. 2 E.*) Ha! there's cousin Rackett and her party; they shan't know me. (*puts on his mask. Music.*)

Enter FOLLY, L. U. E., on a hobby-horse, with cap and bells.

VILL. Hey! Tom fool! what business have you here?

FOLLY. What, sir! affront a prince in his own dominion! (*Music. Struts off, R. 2 E.*)

Enter MRS. RACKETT, LADY FRANCES, SIR GEORGE, and FLUTTER, R. U. E.

MRS. R. Look at this dumpling Jew; he must be a Levite by his figure. You have surely practiced the flesh hook a long time, friend, to have raised that goodly presence.

HARDY. About ash long, my brisk widow, ash you have been angling for a second hushband; but my hook ish been better baited than yoursh. You have only caught gudgeons, I see. (*pointing to FLUTTER.*)

FLUT. (R.) O, what have we here, some genius our hostess has hired to entertain the company with their accidental sallies. Let me look at your common-place book, friend; I want a few good things. (*x's to HARDY.*)

HARDY. I know it, but you vilsh spoil dem in repeating—or, if not, dey'll gain you no reputation—fur nobody will believe dey are your own.

SIR G. He knows ye, Flutter! he fancies himself a wit, I see. (*FLUTTER goes up.*)

HARDY. There's no depending on vhat *you* see—the eyes of the shellous are not to be trushted. Try to see clear vhen you looks after your lady.

FLUT. (*comes down L. of SIR GEORGE*) He knows *you*, Sir George.

SIR G. (*aside*) What! am I the town talk? (*retires up.*)

HARDY. (*aside*) I can neither see Doricourt nor Letty. I must find them out. (*Exit HARDY, L. U. E.*)

MRS. R. Well, Lady Frances, is not all this charming? Could you have conceived such a brilliant assemblage of objects?

LADY F. Delightful! The days of enchantment are restored; the columns glow with sapphires and rubies; emperors and fairies, beauties and dwarfs meet me at every step.

SIR G. (*comes down L. of LADY FRANCES.*) How lively are first impressions on sensitive minds! In two hours, vapidity and languor will take the place of that exquisite sense of joy which flutters your susceptible heart.

MRS. R. What an inhuman creature! Fate has not allowed us these sensations above ten times in our lives, and would you have us suppress them by anticipation? (*SIR G. and MRS. R. talk apart.*)

FLUT. O, your wise men are the greatest fools upon earth! they reason about enjoyments, and the *philosophy* of pleasure, whilst the essence escapes. Look, Lady Frances! D'ye see that figure strutting in the dress of an emperor? He has stolen a march upon the servants at the door—his father sells oranges in Botolph-lane. That gipsy is a maid of honour, and that undertaker—a physician.

LADY F. Why, you know everybody!

FLUT. O, every creature! A mask is nothing at all to me. I can give you the whole history of half the people here. In the next apartment there is a whole family, who, to my knowledge, have lived on water-cresses this month, to make a figure here to-night; but, to make up for that, they'll cram their pockets with cold ducks and chickens for a carnival to-morrow.

LADY F. O, I should like to see this provident family.

FLUT. Honour me with your arm.

(*Exeunt FLUTTER, and LADY FRANCES, R. 2 E.*)

MRS. R. (*advances.*) Come, Sir George, you shall be *my* beau. We'll make a tour of the rooms, and meet them. O, your pardon, you must follow Lady Frances: or the wit and graces of Mr. Flutter may drive you out her head. Ha, ha, ha!

(*Exit MRS. RACKETT, R. 1 E.*)

SIR G. I was going to follow her, and now I dare not.

How can I be such a fool as to be governed by the fear of that ridicule which I despise?

(*Music. Exit SIR GEORGE, L. U. E.*)

Enter DORICOURT, R. U. E., meeting a MASK dressed as a Pilgrim.

DORI. Ha! my lord; I thought you had been engaged at Westminster on this important night.

MASK. So I am—I slipped out as soon as Lord Trope got upon his legs; I can badiner here an hour or two, and be back again before he is down. Here's a fine figure! I'll address her.

Enter LETITIA, R. 2 E.

Charity, fair lady! Charity for a poor pilgrim.

LETI. Charity! If you mean my prayers, Heaven grant thee wit, pilgrim.

MASK. Blessings I should ask from a devotee; but from you I ask the charities beauty should bestow—soft looks, sweet words.

LETI. Alas! I am bankrupt of these, and forced to turn beggar myself. (*DORICOURT advances—aside*) There! he is! how shall I catch his attention?

MASK. Do you beg too! Come, we'll proceed together then, through the world—if you'll accept my hand.

LETI. I'll make you my partner—not for life, but through the soft mazes of a minuet. Dare you dance?

DORI. Some spirit in that!

MASK. I dare do anything you command. That, lady, is against my vow—but here comes a man of the world. (*a MASK advances, he introduces him to LETITIA.*)

DORI. Do you know her, my lord?

MASK. No. Such a woman as that would formerly have been known in any disguise; but beauty is now common—Venus seems to have given her cestus to the whole sex. (*Music.—a minuet.*)

DORI. (*during the minuet*) She dances divinely. (*when ended, exit LETITIA, R. 2. E.*) Somebody must know her! Let us inquire who she is. (*Music.—exit DORICOURT, R. U. E.*)

Enter SAVILLE as an Enchanter and KITTY WILLIS in a domino like LADY FRANCES, L. U. E.—Music ceases.

SAVIL. Though he endeavoured to keep himself concealed, I have discovered Courtall habited as Sir George.

HARDY. Listen to me. I hain't slept to-night, for thinking of plots to plague Doricourt; and they drove one another out of my head so quick that I was as giddy as a goose, and could make nothing of them—contrive something, Cousin Rackett, do.

MRS. R. I have it—I have it! You shall not undeceive him, Letitia, until he is your husband. Marry him under the impressions he has of Miss Hardy, and when you are his wife——

LETI. I see the whole—that's the very thing.

HARDY. But, I foresee the end of it—It will not succeed—you know the wedding is not to take place this week or more, and Letty will never be able to play the fool so long.

MRS. R. The knot shall be tied to-night. I have it all here (*pointing to her forehead*) the license is ready. Feign yourself seriously ill; send for Doricourt, and tell him you cannot go out of the world in peace, unless you first see the ceremony performed.

HARDY. I feign myself ill! I could as soon feign myself a Roman ambassador. I was never ill in my life but with the toothache—when Letty's mother was a breeding.

MRS. R. O, I have no fears for you. But what says Letitia? Are you willing to make the irrevocable vow before night?

LETI. O, Heavens! I—'tis so exceeding sudden, that really——

MRS. R. That really you are frightened out of your wits, lest it should be impossible to contrive it. But I'll manage it, and you shall be Mrs. Doricourt before night. Come, put off your conquering dress, and get all your awkward airs ready, (*to HARDY*) go to bed directly; your room shall be cramm'd with vials, and all the apparatus of death.

HARDY. Well, by and by. The budget's to be opened this morning. I must first step down to the house.

MRS. R. What, sir! won't your attendance be excused by a mortal sickness?

HARDY. Why, I believe, Cousin Rackett, there are rogues, who, on that plea, would willingly excuse many of us—with a view to the health of the nation. But ——

MRS. R. But—you must not stir out, sir; stay and practice a few groans—and I'll answer for the plot.

LETI. Married in jest! 'Tis an odd idea! Well, I'll venture it. (*exeunt LETITIA and MRS. RACKETT, R. 1. E.*)

HARDY. In truth, I'd rather go anywhere out of the way of this scheme;—I'm half afraid, I foresee some ill happening from this making-believe die before one's time. But hang it—ahem! I am a stout man yet; only fifty-six. What's that? In the last yearly bills there were three lived to above a hundred. Fifty-six! Fiddle-de-dee! I am not afraid, not I. (*Exit, R. 1. E.*)

SCENE II.—(3. G.) *Doricourt's lodgings.*—Sofa R. Table and chairs L.—DORICOURT discovered in his robe de chambre, R.

Enter SAVILLE, L. 1. E.

SAVIL. Undressed, so late?

DORI. I didn't go to bed till late; 'twas late before I slept—late when I rose. Do you know Lord George Jennett?

SAVIL. Yes.

DORI. Has he a mistress?

SAVIL. Yes.

DORI. What sort of a creature is she?

SAVIL. Why, she spends him three thousand a-year with the ease of a duchess, and entertains his friends with the grace of a Ninon. Ergo, she is handsome, spirited, and clever. (*DORICOURT walks about disordered.*) In the name of caprice, what ails you?

DORI. You have hit it. *Elle est mon caprice.* The mistress of Lord George Jennett is my caprice. O, insufferable!

SAVIL. What, you saw her at the masquerade?

DORI. *Saw* her—*loved* her—died for her, without knowing her; and now, the curse is, I cannot hate her.

SAVIL. Ridiculous enough! All this distress about a kept woman, whom any man may have, I dare swear, in a fortnight. They've been jarring some time.

DORI. Have her! The sentiment I have conceived for the witch is so unaccountable, that this is the very idea I cannot endure. Was she a woman of honour, as a wife, I could adore her; but I really believe, if she should send me an assignation, I should hate her.

SAVIL. Hey-day! This sounds like love. What becomes of poor Miss Hardy?

DORI. Her name gives me an ague! Dear Saville, how shall I contrive to make old Hardy cancel the engagements? The moiety of the estate which she will forfeit, shall be her's the next moment by deed of gift.

SAVIL. Let me see. Can't you get it insinuated that you are a devilish wild fellow; attached to gaming, and so forth?

DORI. Ay, such a character might have done some good two centuries back. But who can it frighten now? I believe it must be the scheme of feigned madness at last. There, will that do for a grin? (*affects madness.*)

SAVIL. Ridiculous! But how are you certain that the woman who has so bewildered you belongs to Lord George?

DORI. Flutter told me so.

SAVIL. Then fifty to one against the intelligence.

DORI. It must be true. There was a mystery in her manner, for which nothing else can account. (*a rapping, L.*) Who can this be?

SAVIL. (*looks out.*) The proverb is your answer; 'tis Flutter himself. Give him a scene of the madman, and see how it takes.

DORI. I will; a good way to send it about town. Shall it be the melancholy kind, or the raving?

SAVIL. Rant!—downright rant! Here he comes.

DORI. Talk not to me, who can pull comets by the beard, and overset an island.

Enter FLUTTER, L. 1. E.

There! This is he! (×'s to FLUTTER, and seizes him) —this is he who hath sent my poor soul, without coat or breeches, to be tossed about in ether like a duck-feather; Villain, give me my soul again!

FLUT. Upon my soul, I haven't got it. (DORICOURT dances over to R. FLUTTER exceedingly frightened.)



SAVIL. O, Mr. Flutter, what a melancholy sight! I never thought to see my poor friend reduced to this.

FLUT. Mercy defend me! What, is he mad?

SAVIL. You see how it is. An Italian lady—jealousy—gave him a drug; and every full of the moon—

DORI. Moon! Who dares talk of the moon? The patroness of genius—the rectifier of wits—the—O! here she is! I feel her—she tugs at my brain—she has it—she has it—O! (Jumps off R. 1 E.)

FLUT. She has it! hang me but I think you have it. This is dreadful! Exceedingly dreadful I protest. Have you had a mad doctor?

SAVIL. Not yet. The worthy Miss Hardy—what a misfortune!

FLUT. Ay, very true. Do they know it?

SAVIL. O, no; the paroxysm seized him but this morning.

FLUT. Adieu; I must go and tell—I can't stay. (going in great haste, L.)

SAVIL. But you must stay (*holding him*) and assist me; perhaps he'll return again in a moment; and when he is in this way, his strength is prodigious.

FLUT. Can't indeed; can't upon my soul—can't.

(*going, L.*)

SAVIL. Flutter—don't make a mistake now; remember 'tis Doricourt that's mad.

FLUT. Yes—you mad.

SAVIL. No, no; Doricourt.

FLUT. Egad, that I may be quite sure I don't mistake, I'll say you are both mad. (*Exit FLUTTER, L. 1 E., SAVILLE R. 1 E. FLUTTER returns L.*) I think I'll have one more peep, though. (*×'s to R. 1 E.*)

DORI. (*without, R. 1 E.*) Bring me a pickled elephant.

(*FLUTTER runs off, L. 1 E.*)

SCENE III.—*Sir George Touchwood's House.* (2 G.) *Window L. F.*

Enter SIR GEORGE, L. 1 E., and LADY FRANCES TOUCHWOOD, R. 1 E.

SIR G. The bird is escaped; Courtall is gone to France.

LADY F. Have you been to seek him? How did you get his name? I should never have told it you.

SIR G. I learned it in the first coffee-house I entered. Everybody is full of the story.

LADY F. Thank Heaven he's gone! But let us give our minds to a pleasanter subject. The Hardy family are forming a plot upon your friend Doricourt, and we are expected to assist.

SIR G. With all my heart, my angel; but they told me Mr. Saville would be at home in half an hour, and I am impatient to see him. The adventure of last night—

LADY F. Think of it only with gratitude. The danger I was in has overset a new system of conduct, that perhaps I was too much inclined to adopt. But henceforward, my dear Sir George, you shall be my constant companion and protector. And when they ridicule the

unfashionable creatures, the felicity of our hearts will make their satire pointless.

SIR G. Charming angel! You almost reconcile me to Courtall. (*knock*, L. 1 E.) Hark! Here's company. (*going to window*, L. F.) 'Tis your lively widow. I'll away to Savile. (*Exit* B. 1 E.)

Enter MRS. RACKETT, L. 1 E.

MRS. R. Oh, Lady Frances! I am shocked to death. 'Tis all over. Doricourt is mad.

LADY F. Mad!

MRS. R. My poor Letitia! Just as we were enjoying ourselves with the prospect of a scheme that was planned for their mutual happiness, in came Flutter breathless, with the intelligence. I flew here to know if you had heard it.

LADY F. No, indeed; and I hope it is one of Mr. Flutter's dreams.

Enter SAVILLE, L. 1 E.

Mr. Saville, I rejoice to see you, though Sir George will be disappointed; he's gone to your lodgings.

SAVIL. I should have been happy to have prevented Sir George. I hope your ladyship's adventure last night did not disturb your dreams?

LADY F. Not at all; for I never slept a moment. My escape—the importance of my obligations to you, prevented my sleeping a moment. But we have just had shocking intelligence. Is it true that Doricourt is mad?

SAVIL. (*aside*) So the business is done. Madam, I am sorry to say that I have just been a melancholy witness of his furious ravings.

MRS. R. Flutter told us the whole history. Some Italian princess gave him a drug, in a box of sweetmeats sent to him by her own page; and it renders him lunatic exactly one week in every month. Poor Miss Hardy! I never felt so much on any occasion in my life.

SAVIL. To soften your concern, I will inform you, madam, that Miss Hardy is less to be pitied than you imagine.

MRS. R. Why so, sir ?

SAVIL. 'Tis rather a delicate subject ; but he did not love Miss Hardy.

MRS. R. He *did* love Miss Hardy, sir, and would have been the happiest of men.

SAVIL. Pardon me, madam ; his heart was not only free from that lady's chains, but absolutely captivated by another—but, if you know better than he does ——

MRS. R. Sir ; why, I *do* know better than he does. It was Miss Hardy *herself* who captivated him at the masquerade, and charmed him in disguise. He professed the most violent passion for her ; and a plan was laid this evening to cheat him into happiness by marrying him to the unrecognised object of his love.

SAVIL. Ha, ha, ha ! Upon my soul, I must beg your pardon ! I have not eaten of the Italian princess's box of sweetmeats, sent by her own page ; and yet I am as mad as Doricourt. Ha, ha, ha !

MRS. R. So it appears. What can all this mean ?

SAVIL. Why, he has never been out of his perfect senses ; though he will lose them through joy when I tell him what I have learnt. The madness was only a feint, to avoid marrying Miss Hardy. I'll carry him the intelligence directly. (*going*)

MRS. R. Not for worlds. I owe him revenge now for what he has made us suffer. You must promise not to divulge a syllable I have told you ; and when Doricourt is summoned to Mr. Hardy's, prevail on him to come—madness and all.

LADY F. Pray do, now I am in the secret. I should like to see him showing off.

SAVIL. Why, 'tis inhuman to conceal his happiness. Yet, let me consider—his joy will eventually be greater ; —besides the plot and counterplot will hasten the catastrophe.

MRS. R. The what ?

SAVIL. The—will hasten the marriage. (*bows*)

MRS. R. Beware ! I know with marriage you are out of humour, now ; to break your heart for which I may, perhaps, some six years hence, have you myself.

SAVIL. If ever I should be tired of single life—there no lady I would so willingly make my executioner.

MRS. R. I am going home; so I'll set you down at his lodgings, and acquaint you by the way with our whole scheme. *Allons!*

SAVIL. I attend you.

MRS. R. (to LADY F.) You won't fail us?

LADY F. No; depend on us.

Exit R.

(SAVILLE and MRS. RACKETT, L. 1. E.)

SCENE IV.—(3. G.) *Doricourt's Lodgings, as before.*

DORICOURT *seated, reading, on sofa, R. C.*

DORI. (*flings away the book*) What effect can the morals of fourscore have on a mind torn with passion? (*musings*) Is it possible such a soul as hers can support itself in so humiliating a situation? A kept woman! (*rising*)

Enter SAVILLE, L. 1. E.

SAVIL. I have news for you. Poor Hardy is confined to his bed; they say he is going out of the world by the first post, and he wants to give you his blessing.

DORI. Ill! so ill! I am sorry from my soul. He's a worthy little fellow—if he had not the gift of foreseeing so strongly.

SAVIL. Well, you must go and take leave.

DORI. What! to act the lunatic in the dying man's chamber?

SAVIL. Exactly the thing; for his last commands must be that you are not to marry his daughter.

DORI. That's true, by Jupiter! and yet, hang it, impose upon a father at so serious a moment!—I can't do it (×'s L.)

SAVIL. I am answerable for your appearance, though it should be in a straight waistcoat. He knows your situation, and seems the more desirous of an interview.

DORI. I don't like encountering Rackett. She's an arch little devil, and will discover the cheat.

SAVIL. There's a fellow!—cheated ninety-nine women, and now afraid of the hundredth.

DORI. And with reason; for that hundredth is a widow.
(*Exeunt L.*)

SCENE V.— *Apartment at Hardy's.* (2. G.)

Enter MRS. RACKETT *and* MISS OGLE, L. 1. E.

MISS O. And so Miss Hardy is actually to be married to-night?

MRS. R. If her fate does not deceive her. You are apprised of the scheme, and we hope it will succeed.

MISS O. (*aside*) Deuce take her! she's six years younger than I am—(*to Mrs. R.*) Is Mr. Doricourt handsome?

MRS. R. Handsome, generous, young, and rich. There's a husband for ye! Isn't he worth pulling caps for?

MISS O. (*aside*) I'my conscience the widow speaks as though she'd give cap, ears, and all for him—I wonder you didn't try to catch this wonderful man, Mrs. Rackett?

MRS. R. Really, Miss Ogle, I had not time. Besides, when I marry, so many stout young fellows will hang themselves, that, out of regard to society, in these sad times, I shall postpone it for a few years. (*aside*) That will cost her a new lace—I heard it crack.

Enter SIR GEORGE *and* LADY FRANCIS, L. 1. E.

SIR G. Well, here we are; but where's the knight of the woeful countenance?

MRS. R. He will be here soon, I hope; for a woeful night it will be without him.

SIR G. O, fie! Do you condescend to pun?

Enter FLUTTER, L. 1. E.

FLUT. Here he comes! here he comes! I ran up as fast as I could, as soon as I saw him alight from his carriage.

SAVIL. (*without, L.*) Come, let me guide you! This way, my poor friend! Why are you so furious?

DORI. (*without, L.*) The house of death; to the house of death!

Enter DORICOURT and SAVILLE, L. 1 E.

Ah! this is the spot! (*FLUTTER rushes to R. corner.*)

LADY F. How wild and fiery he looks!

MISS O. Now, I think he looks terrified at us!

FLUTTER. Poor creature, how his eyes work.

MRS. R. I never saw a madman before. Let me examine him. Will he bite?

SAVIL. Pray keep out of his reach, ladies. You don't know your danger. He's like a wild cat, if a sudden fancy seizes him.

MRS. R. You talk like a keeper of wild cats. How much do you demand for showing the monster?

DORI. (*aside*) I don't like this. I must rouse their sensibility. (*x's c.*) There! there she darts through the air in liquid flames.—Down again.—Now I have her. Oh, she burns! she scorches! O, she eats into my very heart! (*falls into SAVILLE'S arms.*)



MRS. R. 'Tis the apparition of the wicked Italian princess.

FLUT. Hold her highness tight, Doricourt.

MISS O. Give her a pinch, before you let her go.

OMNES. Ha, ha, ha!

DORI. Am I laughed at!

MRS. R. Laughed at? ay, to be sure. Why, I could play the madman better than you. There! there she is! Now I have her! Ha, ha, ha! Flutter, why don't you catch me? (*falls into the arms of FLUTTER, R.*)

DORI. I knew that widow would find me out. I'll leave the house: I'm covered with confusion. (*going, L.*)

SIR G. Stay, sir; you must not go. 'Twas poorly done, Mr. Doricourt, to affect madness, rather than fulfil your engagements.

DORI. Affect madness? S'death, sir, I am.—Saville, what can I do?

SAVIL. Since you are discovered, like other honest people, confess the whole.

MRS. R. Aye plead guilty, and pray for mercy.

DORI. Yes, since my designs have been so unaccountably discovered, I will avow the whole. I cannot love Miss Hardy, and I will never——

SAVIL. Hold, my dear Doricourt? What will the world say to such——

DORI. Hang the world! What will the world give me for the loss of happiness? Must I sacrifice my peace, to please the world?

SIR G. Yes, everthing, rather than be branded with dishonour.

LADY F. Though *our* arguments should fail, there is a pleader whom you surely cannot withstand. *The dying Mr. Hardy* supplicates you not to forsake his child.

SIR G. *The dying Mr. Hardy!*

SAVIL. *The dying Mr. Hardy!*

MRS. R. *The dying Mr. Hardy!*

MISS O. *The dying Mr. Hardy!*

FLUT. *The dying Mr. Hardy!*

(*They speak this one after another, R. to L. in a line.*)

well, I am glad it is so—I am glad it is so!

Enter VILLIERS, R. D. 1 E.

VILL. *The dying Mr. Hardy* requests you to grant him

a moment's conversation, Mr. Doricourt, though you should persist to send him miserable to the grave. Let me conduct you to his chamber.

DORI. O, ay, anywhere; to the antipodes—to the moon—carry me, Do with me what you will.

MRS. R. I'll follow, and let you know what passes.

(*Exeunt* VILLERS, DORICOURT, MRS. RACKETT and Miss OGLE, R. 1 E.)

FLUT. Ladies, ladies, have the charity to take me with you, that I may make no blunder in repeating the story. (*Exit*, R. 1 E.)

LADY F. Sir George, you don't know Mr. Saville.

(*Exit* R. 1 E.)

SIR G. Ten thousand pardons; I have been with the utmost impatience at your door twice to-day.

SAVIL. I am concerned you had so much trouble, Sir George.

SIR G. Trouble! what a word! I hardly know how to address you, your having preserved Lady Frances in so imminent a danger. Start not, Saville; to protect Lady Frances was *my* right. You have wrested from me my dearest privilege.

SAVIL. I hardly know how to answer such a reproach.

SIR G. There is but one method by which my feelings can be satisfied—I cannot endure that my wife should be indebted to any man, who is less than my brother.

SAVIL. Explain yourself.

SIR G. I have a sister, Saville, who is amiable; and you are worthy of her. I shall give her a commission to steal your heart, out of revenge for what you have done.

SAVIL. I am infinitely honoured, Sir George, but—

SIR G. I will not listen to a sentence which begins with so unpromising a word. You must go with us into Hampshire; and if you see each other with the eyes I do, I know no one to whose heart I would so readily commit the care of my sister's happiness.

SAVIL. I will attend to you with pleasure but not

on the plan of retirement. Society has claims on Lady Frances that forbid it.

SIR G. Claims, Saville ?

SAVIL. Yes, claims ; Lady Frances was born to be the ornament of courts. She is sufficiently alarmed not to wander beyond the reach of her protector ; and, from the British court, the most tenderly anxious husband could not wish to banish his wife. Bid her keep in her eye the bright example who presides there, the splendour of whose rank yields to the superior lustre of her virtue.

Re-enter MRS. RACKETT, LADY FRANCES, MISS OGLE, and
FLUTTER, R. 1 E.

MRS. R. O, heavens ; do you know——

FLUT. Let me tell the story. As soon as Doricourt——

MRS. R. I protest, you shan't. Said Mr. Hardy——

FLUT. No, 'twas Doricourt spoke first—says he—no, 'twas the parson—says he——

MRS. R. Stop his mouth, Sir George—he'll spoil the tale.

SIR G. Never heed the circumstances—the result—the result.

MRS. R. No, no ; you shall have it in form. Mr. Hardy performed the sick man like an angel. He sat up in bed, and talked so pathetically, that the tears stood in Doricourt's eyes.

FLUT. Ay, stood—they did not drop, but stood. I shall in future be very exact ; the parson seized the moment ; you know they never miss an opportunity.

MRS. R. “ Make haste,” said Doricourt ; “ if I have time to reflect, poor Hardy will die unhappy.”

FLUT. They were got as far as the day of judgment, when we slipped out of the room.

SIR G. Then, by this time, they must have reached amazement, which everybody knows is the end of matrimony.

MRS. R. Ay, the reverend fathers ended the service with that word, prophetically—to teach the bride what a capricious monster a husband is.

SIR G. I rather think it was sarcastically—to prepare

the bridegroom for the unreasonable humours and vagaries of his helpmate.

LADY F. Here comes the bridegroom of to-night.

Re-enter DORICOURT and VILLERS, R. 1 E. — VILLERS whispers to SAVILLE, who goes out, L. 1 E.

OMNES. Joy! joy! joy! (*DORICOURT walks about in front.*)

MISS O. If he's a sample of bridegrooms, keep me single! A younger brother, from the funeral of his father, could not carry a more fretful countenance.

FLUT. O, now he's melancholy mad, I suppose.

LADY F. You do not consider the importance of the occasion.

VILL. No; nor how shocking a thing it is, for a man to be forced to marry one woman while his heart is devoted to another.

MRS. R. Well, now 'tis over, I confess to you, Mr. Doricourt, I think 'twas a most ridiculous piece of Quixotism, to give up the happiness of a whole life to a man who perhaps has but a few moments to be sensible of the sacrifice.

FLUT. So it appeared to me. But, thought I, Mr. Doricourt has travelled—he knows best.

DORI. (*on R.*) Confusion! did ye not all set upon me? Didn't ye talk to me of honour—compassion—justice?

SIR G. Very true—you have acted according to their dictates, and I hope the utmost felicity of the married state will reward you.

DORI. Never, Sir George! To felicity I bid adieu; but I will endeavour to be content. Where is my—I must speak it—where is my wife?

Enter LETITIA, L. 1 E., masked, led by SAVILLE.

SAVIL. Mr. Doricourt, this lady was pressing to be introduced to you.

DORI. (*starting*) Oh!

LETI. I told you last night you should see me at a time when you least expected me, and I have kept my promise.

VILL. Whoever you are, madam, you could not have arrived at a happier moment. Mr. Doricourt is just married.

LETI. Married! impossible! 'tis but a few hours since he swore to me eternal love. I believed him, gave him up my virgin heart, and now! Ungrateful sex!

DORI. Your virgin heart! No, lady (×'s L. c.) my fate, thank Heaven, yet wants that torture. Nothing but the conviction that you was another's could have made me think one moment of marriage, to have saved the lives of half mankind. But this visit, madam, is as barbarous as unexpected. It is now my duty to forget you, which, spite of your situation, I found difficult enough.

LETI. My situation! what situation?

DORI. I must apologize for explaining it in this company; but, madam, I am not ignorant that you are the companion of Lord George Jennett. (FLUTTER *creeps up the stage alarmed*) and this is the only circumstance that can give me peace.

LETI. I a companion? ridiculous pretence! No, sir know, to your confusion, that my heart, my honour, my name, is unspotted as hers you have married; my birth equal to your own, my fortune large. That, and my person, might have been yours. But sir, farewell! (*going L.*)

DORI. O, stay a moment. (*looks round for FLUTTER, sees him hiding behind the others at back, rushes at and drags him to c.*) Rascal! is she not——

FLUT. Who, *she*? O Lord! no. 'Twas quite a different person that I meant. I never saw that lady before.

DORI. Then never shalt thou see her again. (*shakes FLUTTER violently against the wall, R.*)

MRS. R. Have mercy upon the poor man! Heavens! he'll murder him.

DORI. Murder him! Yes, you, myself, and all mankind. (×'s *in front R. and L.*) Sir George, Saville, Villers, 'twas you who pushed me on this precipice; 'tis you who have scratched from me joy, felicity, and life!

MRS. R. There! now, how well he acts the madman!

This is something like! I knew he would do it well enough when the time came.

DORI. Hard-hearted woman! enjoy my ruin, riot in my wretchedness.

Enter HARDY, hastily, in his nightcap and gown, and face covered with flour, R. 1 E.

HARDY. This is too much. You are now the husband of my daughter; and how dare you show all this passion about another woman?

DORI. Alive again!

HARDY. Alive! ay, and merry. Here! wipe off the the flour from my face. I was never in better health and spirits in all my life. I foresaw 'twould do. Why, my illness was only a fetch man, to make you marry Letty.

DORI. It was? Base and ungenerous! Well, sir, you shall be gratified. The possession of my heart was no object either with you or your daughter. My fortune and name were all you desired, and these—I leave ye. My native country I shall quit, and never behold you more. But, lady, that, in my exile, I may have one consolation, grant me the favour you denied last night:—let me behold all that mask conceals, that your whole image may be impressed on my heart, and cheer my distant solitary hours.

LETTI. This is the most awful moment of my life. (*she turns aside in great agitation*) Oh, Doricourt, the slight action of taking off my mask stamps me the most blest—or miserable of women!

DORI. What can this mean? Reveal your face, I conjure you.

LETTI. (L. C.) Behold it. (*unmasks*)

DORI. (C.) Rapture! transport! heaven! (*kneels to her.*)

FLUT. (R.) Now for a touch of the happy madman.

LETTI. This little stratagem arose from my disappointment in not having made the impression on you I wished. The timidity of the English character threw a veil over me you could not penetrate. You have forced me to emerge in some measure from my natural reserve, and to throw off the veil that hid me.

DORI. I am yet in a state of intoxication—I cannot answer you. Speak on, sweet angel!

LETI. You see I can be any thing; choose then my character—you shall fix it. Shall I be an *English* wife? or, breaking from the bonds of Nature and Education, step forth to the world in all the captivating glare of foreign manners?

DORI. Nothing can be captivating that you are not. You shall be nothing but yourself—I will not wrong your penetration, by pretending that you won my heart at the first interview: but you have now my whole soul—your person, your face, your mind, I would not exchange for those of any other woman breathing.

HARDY. A dog! how well he makes up for past slights!

DORI. Charming, charming creature!

LETI. Congratulate me, my dear friends! Can you conceive my happiness?

HARDY. No, congratulate me, for mine is the greatest.

FLUT. No, congratulate me, that I have escaped with life, and give me some sticking plaster—this wildcat has torn the skin from my throat.

HARDY. Cousin Rackett, I wish you a good husband, with all my heart. Mr. Flutter, I'll believe every word you say this fortnight. Mr. Villers, you and I have managed this to a T. I never was so merry in my life. 'Gad, I believe I can dance (*footing*.)

DORI. My charming bride! It was a strange perversion of taste, that led me to consider the delicate timidity of your deportment as the mark of uninformed mind, or inelegant manners. I feel now it is to that innate modesty that English husbands owe a felicity that married men of other nations are strangers to; it is a sacred veil to your own charms, it is the surest bulwark to your husband's honour; and may the hour never arrive—in which *British* ladies shall sacrifice to foreign glare the grace of modesty.

FLUT.	MISS O.	MRS. R.	VIL.	HARDY.	DORI.	LETI.	SIR G.	LADY F.	SAVIL.
B.					C.				F.

Curtain.

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